

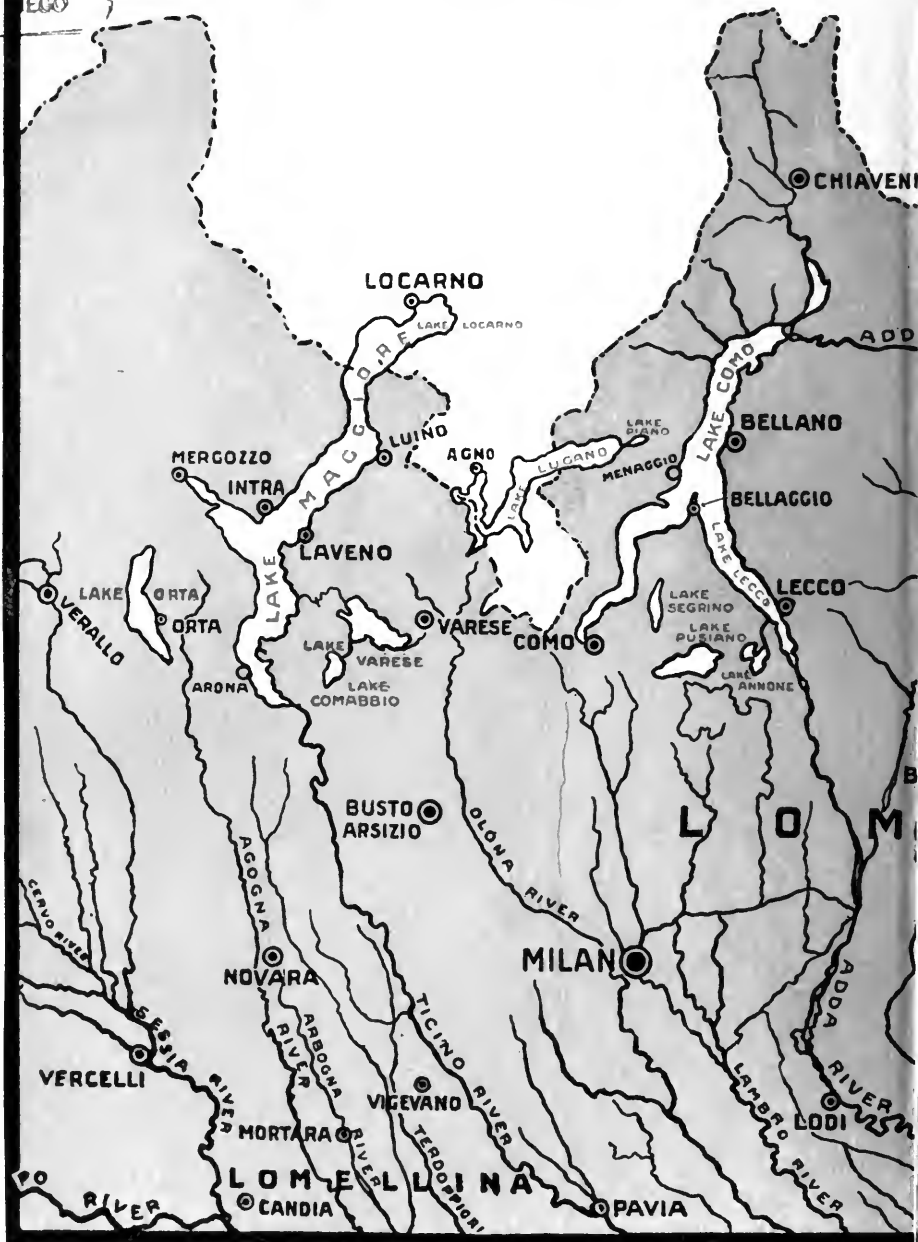
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ITALIAN LAKES

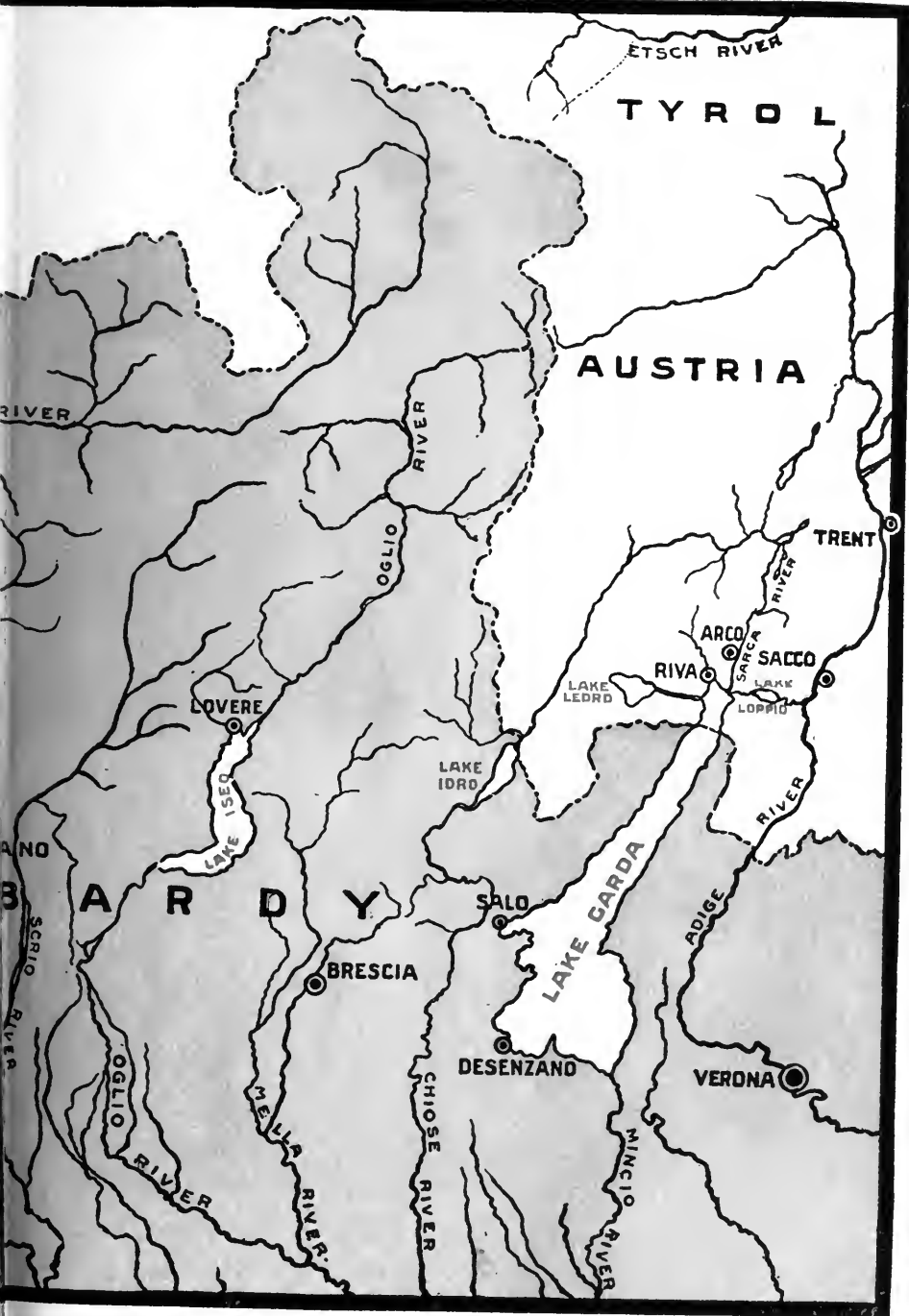


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# SWITZERLAND







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*GANDRIA, ON LAKE LUGANO*

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# THE SPELL OF THE ITALIAN LAKES

Being the record of pilgrimages to familiar and unfamiliar places of the "lakes of azure, lakes of leisure," together with a description of their quaint towns and villa gardens, and the treasures of their art and history.

BY  
*William D. McCrackan*

Author of "Romance and Teutonic Switzerland,"  
"The Fair Land Tyrol," etc.



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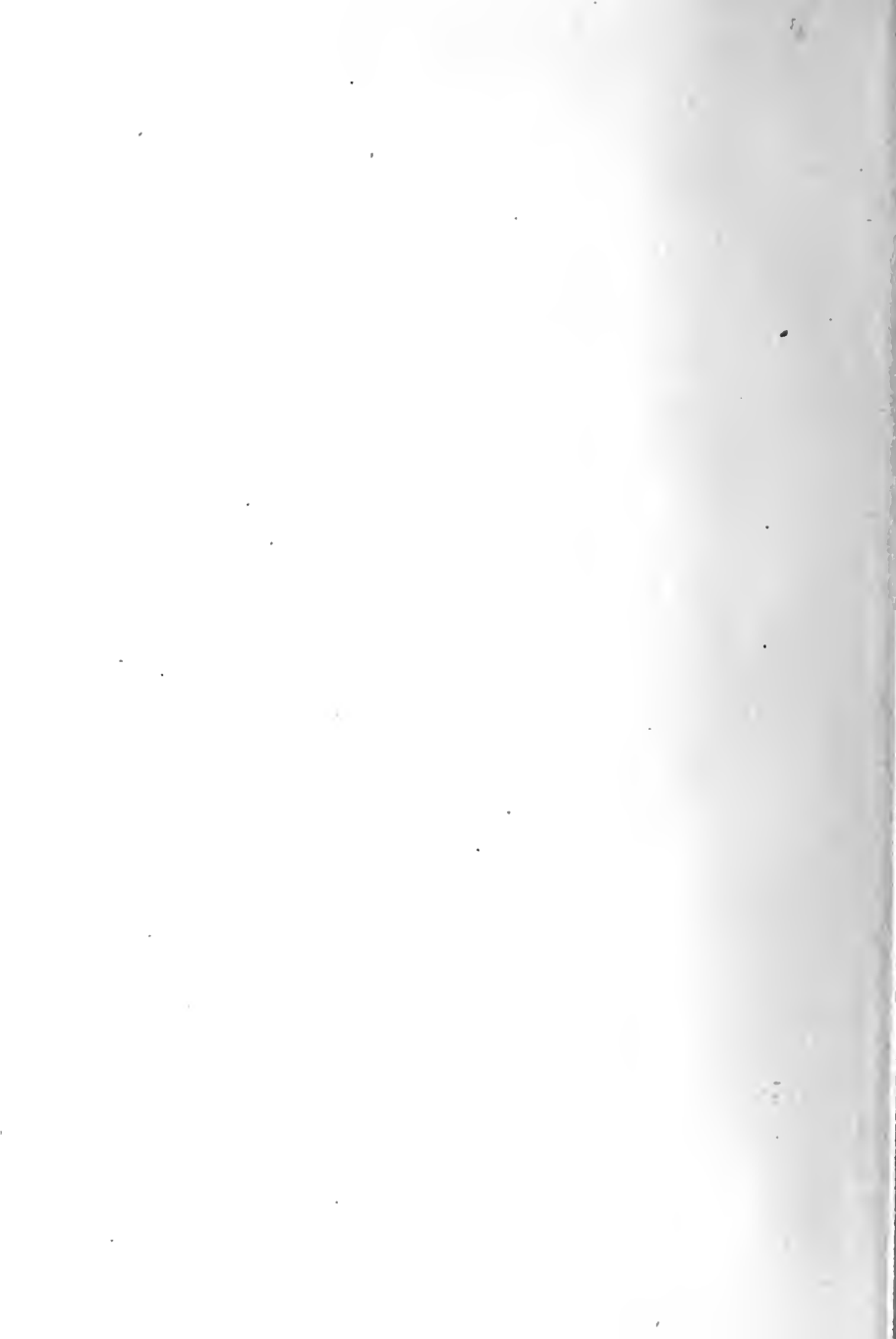
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### PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The cordial reception given Mr. William D. McCrackan's standard work **THE ITALIAN LAKES**, which has gone through numerous editions, has led the publishers to believe that a new and enlarged edition, with illustrations in colour, will be welcome.

The literary and artistic worth of the book makes it appropriate that its reissue should be included in the well known **SPELL SERIES** of travel books, which bring before the reader the charm and spell of the countries which they describe.

For this reason the title has been changed to **THE SPELL OF THE ITALIAN LAKES**.



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# THE SPELL OF THE ITALIAN LAKES

## CHAPTER I

### LAKES OF AZURE

THE Italian lakes express perennial youth and freshness, joyousness and peace. They partake of the Alps and of the South Sea Islands. They recall Switzerland and Samoa. Their mornings sparkle with the glint of glaciers, their noons recall those of Venice or Naples, and their evenings lie hushed under the shadows of great mountains. In their atmosphere there is both the zest of the winter's snow and the warmth of the fruitful summer, and these two combined produce a touch of constant spring.

The Italian lakes are bordered by the pick of Italian gardens. Their blue basins catch the drip from the melting snows and are set

## *The Italian Lakes*

in a land of pink palaces, of orange and lemon groves, of camellias, azaleas, and rhododendron bushes. It is the land of the nightingale in the thicket, the cuckoo in the forest, the lark on the uplands, and the gorgeous lizard in the crevices of the walls. Arboured walks, pergolas of vines, and rare shrubberies lead from parterres to porticos, from grottos to grand terraces. The mountainsides of this lake region rejoice in the lilac crocus, early and late, in the primrose, the starry anemone, and the scented violet of the spring, in the lily-of-the-valley, seeking the shade, and in the gay narcissus on the grass lands. The forest-trees are of chestnut and walnut, larch and cembra and decorative laburnum; and in the heights the alpine flowers, the gentian, the soldanella, the ranunculus, the primula, and a galaxy of others cling and cluster about the rocks.

With never waning winsomeness the Italian lakes have long been making friends among the people of all nations. Ever since it became the fashion for Englishmen to make the Continental tour, for Germans to indulge in an *Italienfahrt*, or for Americans to include these lakes in a trip to Europe, they have been established in popular esti-

## *Lakes of Azure*

mation as representing the very acme of scenic beauty in form and hue. When Bulwer-Lytton wished to mention an environment in his "Lady of Lyons" which an audience could recognize as a veritable prodigy of natural loveliness, he described a spot near Lake Como:

"A deep vale,  
Shut out by Alpine hills from the rude world,  
Near a dear lake, margined by fruits of gold  
And whispering myrtles, glassing softest skies  
As cloudless, save with rare and roseate shadows,  
As I would have thy fate."

To-day, when some scenic painter desires to produce a drop curtain which shall sum up on a few square yards of canvas all that is most striking and picturesque in scenery and outdoor art, he is very apt to paint a bit of an Italian lake, throw in some mountains for a background, and place an awninged boat in a corner of the foreground. What with satin lakes, velvet slopes, red umbrellas on white roads, and tinted villas on the shore line, the region of the Italian lakes is aglow with colour surprises for travellers from all quarters of the globe, especially for those from the soberer north. The picture these lakes present would seem to have no un-

## *The Italian Lakes*

finished or incomplete corners, no crudities needing to be patched up. As they lie, amid their surroundings of peak and plain, they have even been improved upon by man's handiwork. What man could do to emphasize natural beauty has already been largely done through the centuries.

Though the Italian lakes bear a certain family likeness, they are strictly individual; each has its special charms, its distinctive beauties, and its own historic or artistic associations. In private we may have our favourites, but it would be invidious to award the prize of preference publicly.

These lakes recall Mazzini plotting for Italian independence, Garibaldi fighting for it, and Cavour organizing the result; Brabante building churches and Bernardino Luini and Gaudenzio Ferrari decorating them; Carlo Borromeo travelling about his diocese; the missionary Julius preaching on the shores of Lake Orta; the two Plinies residing on their estates at Como; Volta experimenting with electricity; Thorwaldsen and Canova supplying statues for lakeside villas; Manzoni romancing about the people of Lecco and Stoppani writing of its rocks; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,

## *Lakes of Azure*

famed for her letters from Constantinople, taking her ease at Lake Iseo; Virgil, Catullus, Claudian, Dante, Goethe, poetizing about Lake Garda; and Ruskin and Symonds popularizing the art treasures of many of the towns with discriminating literary touches.

Three great railroads have pierced the wall of the Alps and brought the Italian lakes into direct communication with northern lands: the Brenner route, the St. Gothard, and now the Simplon, to give them in the order of their construction. The Mont Cenis, by reason of its position on the extreme west, can hardly be called a direct feeder to the Italian lakes. Each of these railroads is a marvel of industrious ingenuity, and, in an ascending scale, their constructors have each overcome greater engineering difficulties and discovered improved methods for boring. The simple facts about the Simplon, for instance, the last of the great tunnels, are sufficiently astounding. It is the longest railroad tunnel in the world, being twelve and a quarter miles long; its cost has been nearly fifteen millions of dollars; it has taken six and a half years to construct; and the mountain mass above it rises

## *The Italian Lakes*

to a maximum height of some seven thousand feet. It was inaugurated on May 19, 1906, by King Victor Emmanuel and the President of the Swiss Republic conjointly at Brieg, the Swiss terminus of the tunnel.

By contrast with the present method of passing *through* the Simplon, the following letter from Ruskin to his mother, describing his trip *over* it, and dated at Domo d'Ossola, May 5, 1869, will prove of interest: "I left Brieg at six exactly — light clouds breaking away into perfect calm of blue. Heavy snow on the Col — about a league, with wreaths in many places higher than the carriage. Then, white crocus all over the fields, with soldanella and primula farinosa. I walked about three miles up, and seven down, with great contentment, the waterfalls being all in rainbows, and one beyond anything I ever yet saw, for it fell in a pillar of spray against shadow behind, and became rainbow altogether. I was just near enough to get the belt broad, and the down part of the arch; and the whole fall became orange and violet against deep shade. To-morrow I hope to get news of you all, at Baveno."

When the visitor, homeward bound, has taken his last glance for the season from



M. LINDSEY 1717

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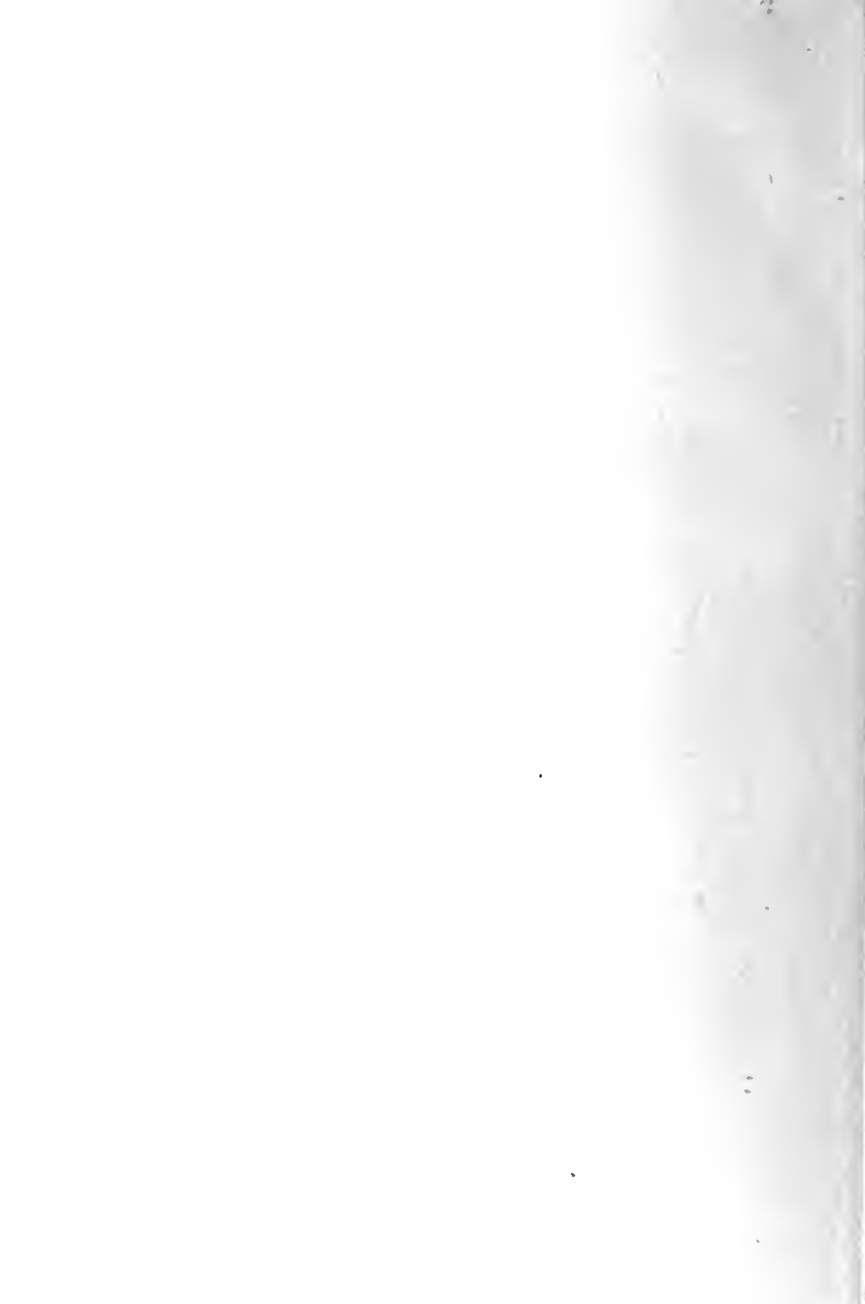
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A Wayside Trattoria  
H. McNeils  
1904



## *Lakes of Azure*

such points of vantage as the high-placed railroad stations of Como or Lugano, has ejaculated his final exclamations of delight, as he travels along the shores of Lakes Maggiore and Orta, or views for the last time on any particular trip the ever memorable expanse of Lake Garda from the defile of Nago, he is sure to confess to a strong desire to return another day and revisit these lakes of azure, lakes of leisure.

The grand hotels, equally with the unpretentious *pensions* and wayside inns, have opened their hospitable doors. There have been trips by steamboat, possibly moonlight rows and climbs to points of view, certainly strolls through gardens full of grace and charm, and visits to stately villas rich in treasures of art. The country folk by their labour have beautified hillside and plain, terracing and planting the slopes with vineyards and many-coloured crops. The gay native sense of colour has brightened the landscape, and even the clatter of the wooden sandals on the cobbled ways has been pleasant to the ear.

And so there is satisfaction for the visitor in knowing that the little return he has made in currency will contribute in some measure

## *The Italian Lakes*

toward the prosperity of the districts he has traversed; will help increase the stock of this world's goods where it may be small, replenish the bare stone barns, rejuvenate the worn-out fields, cause the orchards to bloom more daintily and bear fuller fruitage — in a word tend to make living less arduous on the tiny patches of land, alongshore or up in the heights, whence the view is so noble.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAKING OF THE LAKES

THE great subalpine lakes surround the Alps like a necklace of jewels. They literally depend upon and from the mountains, and the threads by which they are attached are silver torrents and glittering streams coursing down from on high. The jewels in this necklace are made iridescent by the play and interplay of sun and season. They respond to the action of distant snow masses and glaciers on the march.

Of the Italian lakes in particular it may be said that they are great reflectors of the Alps, lying meekly at the feet of the giants and mirroring outline and colour upon their polished faces.

From the valleys on the Italian side the Alps are seen to rise to their full stature, for the southern slope is much steeper than the northern one. Hence the views from the Italian lakes region permit a special breadth

## *The Italian Lakes*

and height and enable one to study mountain formations with a certain degree of comprehension. In order to obtain some idea of prevalent theories in regard to the origin of the Alps, and hence of the great water pockets or lake reservoirs at their feet, take your stand upon one of those lesser, but commanding, heights in the Italian lakes region, whence Alps and plain can be swept by the eye, Monte Motterone, Sasso del Ferro, Monte Generoso, or any other of the summits favourably placed for a bird's-eye view. Then start your theory by imagining yourself back in the Permian, Liassic, Jurassic, or Cretaceous period, when the deep sea is believed to have lain upon the surface of the earth where the Alps now rise, and the very height to which you have climbed was not.

Let us now suppose these ages to have disappeared into the dim perspective of the past, and the quiet which brooded upon the face of the waters to have been broken by a total transformation. The earth, in cooling, has contracted, the crust has been crumpled into folds and the raw material of the Alps, the strata out of which the peaks are to be carved, stand up above the sea, up-



## *The Making of the Lakes*

heaved, not by pressure from below, but from the sides. As soon as these vast arching folds have risen from the bottom of the sea into the clouds, the process of disintegration and denudation begins under the influence of heat and cold, wind and water, snow and rain. Rivers form, and wear and tear great chasms, gorges, and valleys down the flanks of the folds on their way to the sea. Presently the once solid mass is no longer intact, but is cut into ridges and ranges, sections and groups. The Alps stand forth as lofty peaks; the rivers deposit their débris and detritus, the refuse of the heights, in all directions, and fill up Central Europe with sand and gravel. The Ice Age follows, and when that period of cold is finally broken, the Alps appear somewhat as we see them to-day, and perhaps some of the lakes, too.

But the peaks point skyward and must take the consequences. The disintegrating elemental forces that make for a dead level will not leave them alone. The destructive agencies cut and slash, peck and pinch the giants, nipping off a bit here, tearing down a corner there. No sooner has a creditable outline, a rounded form, or a noble horn

## *The Italian Lakes*

been established, than these destructive agencies, like tireless imps, are found at work there with their little hammers, pincers, augers, gimlets, and saws, chipping and disfiguring the fair mountain faces. They try to alter even the mountain meadows, familiar to many generations of men in the valleys below, and seek to tamper with the kindly mountain slopes that have fed the grazing cattle and supported the forests from which to build many thousand cottages and kindle countless fires upon family hearthstones. Still there are compensations and readjustments. The denudation of the Alps fertilizes the plain, filling it with alluvial deposits. In the case of the plain of Lombardy borings indicate that the alluvium is of tremendous, but as yet unknown, depth.

But what of the alpine and subalpine lakes? What say modern theories as to their origin? Much study has been devoted to this question of lake formation by conscientious natural scientists, among others by Englishmen such as Tyndall, Ramsay, Ball, and Lubbock, by the Italians Gastaldi and De Mortillet, and by the Swiss Desor, Studer, and Favre. According to these investigators, there would seem to be room for

## *The Making of the Lakes*

considerable difference of opinion in regard to the origin of the great lakes which surround the Alps and catch their snow and rain fall, north and south. The lakes doubtless arose after the worst of the Ice Age was past and coincidentally with the retreat of the glaciers from the plains, back nearer to their mountain fastnesses and snow sources.

Some of the smaller alpine lakes have been produced by moraines, or rockfalls, blocking the progress of torrents or rivers down to the valleys and causing the water to back up and rise, until it once more made an outlet for itself. Lakes Orta and Iseo arose in this manner.

As for the larger alpine lakes, it was at one time quite generally held in geological circles that their basins had been scooped out wholly by the action of glaciers, reinforced by rivers. But the great depth of most of the Italian subalpine lakes seems to make this theory unsatisfactory. The bottoms of some of these lakes descend below the level of the sea, those of Maggiore and Como more than twelve hundred feet below sea-level. It would be difficult to imagine such profound excavations made by ice or water, so far below the normal water level.

## *The Italian Lakes*

Another explanation has therefore been gaining ground more recently, which is based on the supposition that there has been a subsidence of the Central Alps since the Ice Age. This subsidence would tend to raise the surrounding country, at least relatively, and the rivers which flowed downward from the Alps would find the lower ends of their valleys seemingly tilted up, as it were, and their waters would be caught in veritable pockets or reservoirs. Thus the lakes, as we see them to-day, would be the result, first of ice and water carving out valleys, and then of subsidence altering the level of the valley floors. There is still, however, the possibility that the larger Italian subalpine lakes are the remnants of a sea which once undoubtedly covered the whole plain of Lombardy.

The natural tendency has been for the same process which denudes the Alps also to diminish the area of the Italian lakes. Material has been deposited upon the lake bottoms by the rivers that drain them. Especially is this filling-in process noticeable at the upper ends of the lakes. Thus Lago Maggiore doubtless once extended as far

## *The Making of the Lakes*

north as Bellinzona and Lake Como to Chiavenna.

The colour of alpine and subalpine lakes has long been a source of special joy and wonder to tourists and travellers, artists and poets. There is considerable variety and wide alternation between the extremes of ultramarine blue and deep green. Every intermediate shade is to be found somewhere, in some alpine or subalpine lake, or in some portion of such a lake. Among the Italian lakes a rich blue, similar to that of the Mediterranean, predominates, but there is also a great diversity in colour which serves to emphasize the special characteristics of each lake. Above all, the changing conditions of atmosphere, seasons, wind, and rain, and especially of sun, cause a constant play and interplay which largely modify the original, or basic colour and act as secondary influences. It has been popularly supposed that the blueness of water in general is due to the reflection of the blue sky, but actual experiments indicate that pure water is naturally blue, and so it would follow that the clearest lakes are also the bluest. The green of certain lakes may be due to minute quantities of vegetable matter in solution, to the shal-

## *The Italian Lakes*

lowness of water lying over yellowish sand or rock, to the action of storms in stirring up sediment, or even to microscopic algæ.

Whatever the supposed causes of their changing colours, the Italian lakes themselves remain ever attractive in a sort of unexpectedly spontaneous way. When we think their beauties have been sufficiently differentiated, arranged, sorted, and classified, and their relative values compared, then a day of unusual conditions makes itself felt and all calculations fail. Criticism cannot thrive in their atmosphere nor uncharitableness face their kindly loveliness. They are all friends of men and vary only in their special virtues,—they have no faults.

## CHAPTER III

### PALLANZA

SEEN from Pallanza, Lake Maggiore lies shimmering and smiling southward, down to the lowlands near Arona, and stretches east and west in its most complacent mood and widest expanse to Laveno and Feriolo. In every direction the charm of perfect proportion makes itself felt, and though the lake is broad and tends to imitate the grandeur of the sea, it is kept within the confines of a lake by noble mountains rising clear and sheer to dominate its waters. Sasso del Ferro on the one hand, Monte Motterone on the other, keep watch and ward over the great open space into which the Punta della Castagnola, or peninsula of Pallanza, creeps forward on all fours; while noble ranges with their own peculiar peaks preside over the wayward windings of the lake in its upper reaches, where it is Swiss. By contrast with the rich beauties of the fore-

## *The Italian Lakes*

ground there are the great spurs of the Alps, and above all there is the distant majesty of Monte Rosa, set apart as a beacon of light to glow at dawn and twilight, and to shine by day like a luminous fluff of light.

Pallanza's noble outlook has won its way into the hearts and fulfilled many aspirations of northern races sighing for the south. Hither have come the Germans, attracted by the periodical longing for a trip to Italy, that *Italienfahrt*, which every German seems to carry concealed in his innermost nature. Hither, too, the English have come for years, during the spring and autumn, to rejoice in the colour and climax of scenic beauty which this bay presents. Americans are also to be met in increasing numbers all the year round, and in summer the good people of Milan and the other great cities of Northern Italy come into their very own and take possession. Then it is that they have their excursions, their music and singing, their rowing parties and regattas on the lake, lying calm and dormant under the mid-summer sun or touched into liquid gold by the full-orbed, radiant, and expansive Italian moon.

There is a pleasant quay at Pallanza





PALLANZA



## *Pallanza*

planted with magnolia-trees and a tiny public park jutting out into the lake, whence the view reaches over to the Borromean Islands, to Stresa, Baveno, and their mountain backgrounds. Lago Maggiore is here so wide that one might almost be somewhere in mid-ocean, on an island group of the southern seas, topped by volcanic peaks. Rowboats in plenty wait at the foot of the hotel gardens and beside the walled terraces, to take parties up and down and over across the lake. The boats are gay with awnings, flags, and coloured cushions, and the boatmen are warranted to sing "Santa Lucia," etc., as often as requested, and even oftener, both coming and going. They enjoy some bantering among themselves and a little fun is poked at the world in general, as the flotilla of boats moves off amid exclamations of delight. There is some racing to get off first, the oars splash, there are shouts and challenges, and presently all the little flags flap joyously in unison from the sterns, as the boats line off for the trip to the islands across the lake. After they have gone, the brave brown boatmen (*battellieri*) who have been left behind and have not been hired this time, settle down once more on the stone

## *The Italian Lakes*

parapets of the lakeside to make the best of the situation, to sleep and take their well-earned rest until the next flock of tourists shall call for their services,—and for a time we hear only the pleasant murmur of the little waves as they beat lazily against the lake wall.

But should a storm break over the lake, darkness will blot out the further shores behind a black curtain of advancing rain and cloud. There will be a general scurrying for shelter all along the line. The little boats that remain are then carefully moored and fastened for the ordeal. White spots suddenly appear on the water in front of the black curtain, and a strange white line is traced clear across the bay, where cloud and water meet. A big black barge is seen racing before the storm with bellying square sail, trailing a huge rudder manned by a picturesque lake-man. Havoc seems to lurk in the air and ominous forebodings visit the gay flotillas, but behold, while we look, the black curtain has passed, the sun shines, the water sparkles blue and merry, and laughter rings out from garden and copse once more. The camellias shed their drops of rain; the birds chirp and chatter as before from the

## *Pallanza*

magnolia-trees and the thickets of rhododendron, — and the lake has dried its tears.

Greatly as the natural beauty of Pallanza is beloved by tourists, still it has a public life which is interesting for its own sake. The steamboat-landing forms a special centre of activity, and close by rises the town hall, the Palazzo degli Uffici, the seat of the municipality and sub-prefecture. It is a large building standing upon arches that form a convenient and characteristic Italian arcade and afford shelter alike from sun and rain. Here a small perennial market has its seat which overflows into the open square on certain days of the week. Hither come the townspeople with their kitchen baskets, and the foreign visitors to pry among the curios kept for sale, both ancient and modern. Here also a few porters have their *rendezvous* and lounging-place, whence they may issue forth at the call of duty, and in the meantime take a comprehensive view of all that is going on by land and water.

The sloping shore of Pallanza is paved for a long distance with flagstones, which give the place an air of neatness and good repair. Young girls go to the lake for water, carrying ancient copper vessels of a

## *The Italian Lakes*

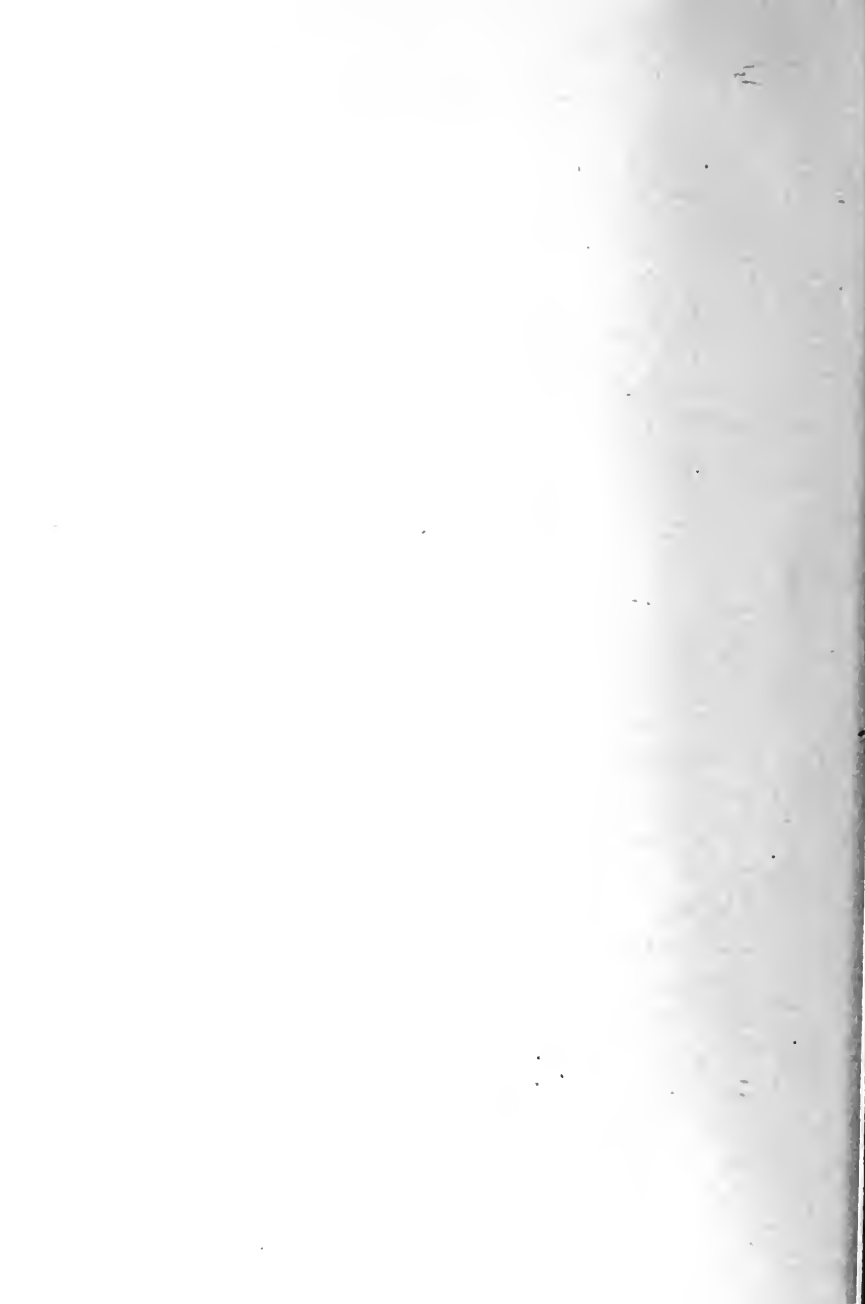
form more or less classic. The family washing is done at almost any convenient point along the paved slope. The women gather their skirts about them and kneel down upon peculiar little stools, or inside of boxes, that stand in the water and have boards in front of them. Then the soaping and pounding and chatting begins and the air resounds with news or no news, as the case may be.

The beautiful tower which overtops Pallanza is one of the finest of the many splendid stone campanili which are to be found in the lake region. In the square stands a statue of Carlo Cordona, a native of Pallanza who played an important part during the period of Italian reconstruction, the great *risorgimento*. Indeed for so small a place Pallanza has an unexpectedly long history. Should the traveller be present on the holiday of the *Statuto*, a chance will be afforded of seeing a military review of the local garrison.

In a learned work by Agostino Viani, entitled "Pallanza Antica e Pallanza Nuova," the author gives good reasons for believing that Pallanza was founded by Celts several centuries before the Christian era and derives its name from the word "palanz,"



A MILITARY REVIEW AT PALLANZA





## *Pallanza*

meaning a place of popular assembly, and referring to the summit of the present Punta della Castagnola. When Drusus and Tiberius conquered the races in the Eastern Alps, Pallanza was incorporated into the Provincia Claudiana. On the little island of San Giovanni, just offshore from the Punta della Castagnola, there arose a Roman *castellum*, which in A. D. 886, along with Pallanza, was granted to the Bishop of Vercelli by the Emperor Charlemagne. After varying fortunes this whole property was ceded in 1152 by the Emperor Barbarossa to the nobles De Castello, the main branch of this family being called Barbavara. These nobles later erected a castle on the mainland, leaving their island fortress to decay. The power of the Barbavara family was broken in 1270, and the citizens of Pallanza entered into a measure of comparative self-government. In 1392 we find Pallanza forming part of the Duchy of Milan, and possessing statutes of its own, which, however, had to be approved by the ducal family of the Visconti in Milan. The rule of the Visconti was succeeded by that of the Sforza family, but Pallanza in 1467 paid 2,200 imperial *lire* and retained its measure of freedom

## *The Italian Lakes*

from the feudal yoke. The Sforza family becoming extinct, the Duchy of Milan was inherited by Emperor Charles V., and Pallanza became Spanish. There ensued an era of considerable local development. In 1520 the foundation was laid for the tall campanile, which was not finished, however, until 1689, after designs by Pellegrini. The markets and fairs of Pallanza gave it increasing wealth and importance. Unfortunately, its exceptional political position also excited constant wonderment and invited envy. In 1621 the citizens of Pallanza had to pay another twenty-three thousand imperial lire in order to retain their freedom from feudal control, but they likewise received at this time a perpetual guarantee of this immunity which was confirmed to them by Philip IV., King of Spain.

Finally the Spanish dominion passed away in its turn, and in 1743, at the treaty of Worms, Pallanza was incorporated into the kingdom of Sardinia and Savoy, Carlo Emanuele III. reigning, and became the capital of a province.

In 1824 the first steamboat made its appearance on the lake. It was called the *Verbano* after the Latin name of Lago Mag-

## *Pallanza*

giore. It made a regular trip up the lake one day and descended the next, resting on Sundays.

There have been several agricultural, industrial, and horticultural exhibitions at Pallanza, which have added to the name and fame of this place as both a beautiful and also an active centre of subalpine life.

Pallanza is so well protected from the winds of winter, that its southern exposure grants it special favours in the way of tropical and exotic vegetation. Whichever way the visitor turns, this special bounty is made manifest, — and in the very sight of the everlasting snows. The water-front presents a succession of garden-girt villas and far-famed nursery-gardens, of which the place is justly proud, one more exquisite than the other, each displaying its own particular charms and treasures. The Punta della Castagnola bears on its back the fine hotels which care so completely for the many visitors, and the road to Intra and beyond presents an unbroken series of pictures, in which one admires by turns the water, the sky, the flowers, and the painstaking handiwork of man in bringing the rocky water-front into subjection.

## *The Italian Lakes*

Out on the white highway some one is walking under a large red umbrella; there is the tinkle of horses' bells; a tiny donkey picking its way with dainty steps and bowed head draws an enormous funnel-shaped cart on two wheels. When we look nearer a man is seen inside sleeping under the awning. The gardens of the hotels, of the villas, and of the nurserymen are redolent with the scent of delicious blossoms and brilliant with unusual hedges and bushes. Rare fir-trees and evergreens cast dark-green shadows among the fresh branches. Drooping willows lean from the banks over the water and form cosy corners where a boat may be moored curtained off from the vivid glare.

Surely nothing could exceed the wealth of colour, the fragrance of the hour, the nobility of curve and line, the tranquillity of the fair prospect — and we are thankful.

Among all the gardens of this district which are open to visitors it is difficult to pick out favourites, for each has its particular perfection. It is only possible to specialize a little. Thus Rovelli's famous nursery-garden is a typical collection of trees and flowers, a veritable botanical establishment. The Villa Franzosini gardens near



A GARDEN OF PALLANZA



## *Pallanza*

Intra offer special attractions by reason of the arrangement of their horticultural treasures. Villa Ada contains an extraordinary abundance of foreign trees. Villa Browne-Casanova takes rank as a conservatory of rare plants. But seeing is believing in matters botanical, and the traveller himself is best fitted to make his own selection and preference, if this can be done at all.

## CHAPTER IV

THE BORROMEAN ISLANDS: ISOLA BELLA,  
ISOLA DEI PESCATORI, ISOLA MADRE, ISOLA  
SAN GIOVANNI

THESE islands constitute a challenge from the tropics thrown with full force into the very faces of the stern, arctic Alps. It is not possible to stay at Pallanza, or the other lakeside resorts of lower Lago Maggiore, without desiring to pay a visit to those wonder islands that beckon so constantly from the blue gulf. They excite curiosity, surprise, and admiration, and irresistibly draw the sightseer for a nearer view.

Therefore some morning, when the birds are calling to each other from bush to bush in the fair Italian garden of the hotel, and are telling each other much good news in liquid musical phrases that transcend any *Leitmotiven*, even of the greatest masters, when the water sparkles invitingly and not too vividly, emitting a sense of youth, fresh-



## *The Borromeo Islands*

ness, and enterprise, then let the boatmen who are waiting eagerly for the chance row you out to these islands, justly famed among lovers of the picturesque for uniqueness in structure, site, and adornment. Moreover, they are quite different, one from another, and thus provide material for several excursions.

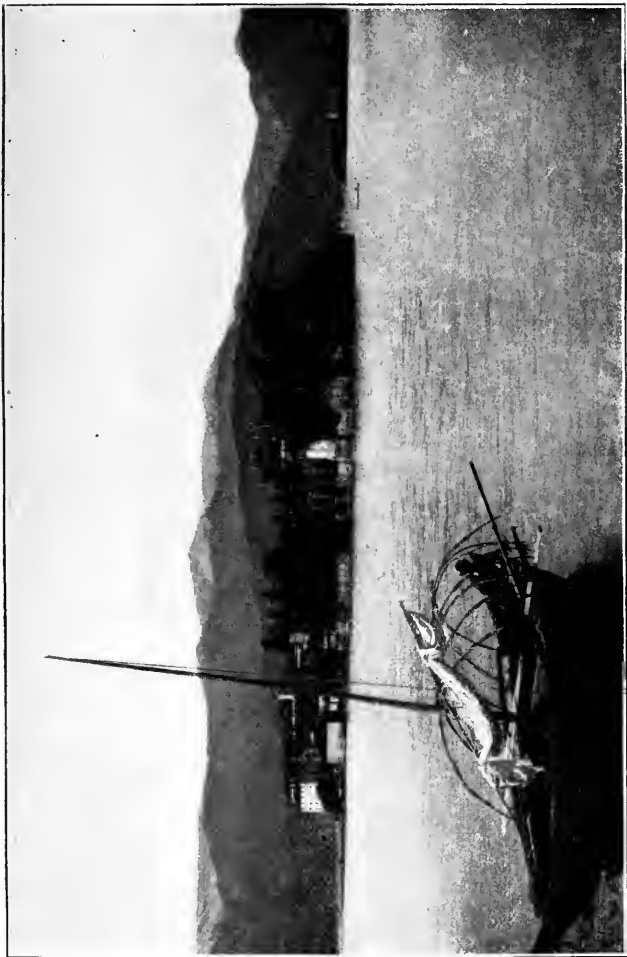
The Borromeo Islands are four in number and derive their name from the family of the Counts of Borromeo, to which three of them belong, Isola Bella, Isola Madre, and the little Isola San Giovanni, close to Pallanza. Isola dei Pescatori is reported to be owned by the fisherfolk, who inhabit it as an hereditary freehold. Of the whole number Isola Bella is the most noted for the exuberance and opulence of its artificial ornamentation. Isola Madre is the largest in point of area, Isola dei Pescatori is the most populous, though also the simplest in point of ornamentation, and Isola San Giovanni the smallest. The visitor can take his choice among these several attractions, and while he is being rowed across the lake it may be interesting for him to know something of the history of these islands.

In her exquisite book, "Italian Villas and

## *The Italian Lakes*

Their Gardens," Miss Edith Wharton calls attention to the fact that, "On the walls of the muniment-room of the old Borromeo palace in Milan, Michelino, a little known painter of the fifteenth century, has depicted the sports and diversions of that noble family . . . against the background of Lake Maggiore and the Borromeo Islands." This is artistic testimony to the early possession of the island by the family whose name they bear.

L. Boniforti in his excellent little guide to the islands mentions a document of 1397, issued by Emperor Wenceslaus, in which the islands are recorded as belonging to the county of Angera, of which the family of Borromeo became the partial feudal rulers in 1441. These islands received the particular attention of successive members of the Borromeo family, and were by them beautified until they have become famous the world over. The work of adornment on Isola Bella was begun in 1632 by Count Carlo Borromeo, the third of that name, who built a small villa there. It was a Count Vitaliano, the fourth of that name, who conceived the idea of building a large chateau and giving that island its present



ISOLA BELLA



## *Isola Bella*

marvellous aspect, calling to his service artists and architects and covering the barren rocky surface with fruitful soil. The work occupied the years from 1650 - 71.

## *Isola Bella*

As the boat glides out into the deeper portions of the Bay of Pallanza, the water that laughingly laps the bow grows richer in colour and we seem to have ventured forth upon some inlet of the Caribbean Sea. Presently Isola Bella looms up in all its startling originality, a huge palazzo partly unfinished, at one end, and gardens of extraordinary fantasy at the other. Lines of age, reinforced by the never ceasing caress of plant life, have happily broken what might seem to northern eyes an excessive artificiality, and the foliage of superb exotics has softened the extreme regularity and straightness of stone terrace and balustrade. As we land at the great water steps, the centuries roll back and we become the guests of an open-handed magnate of the seventeenth century, whose hospitality is exhibited in a display of all that the arts of his day, big and little, could do to make his

## *The Italian Lakes*

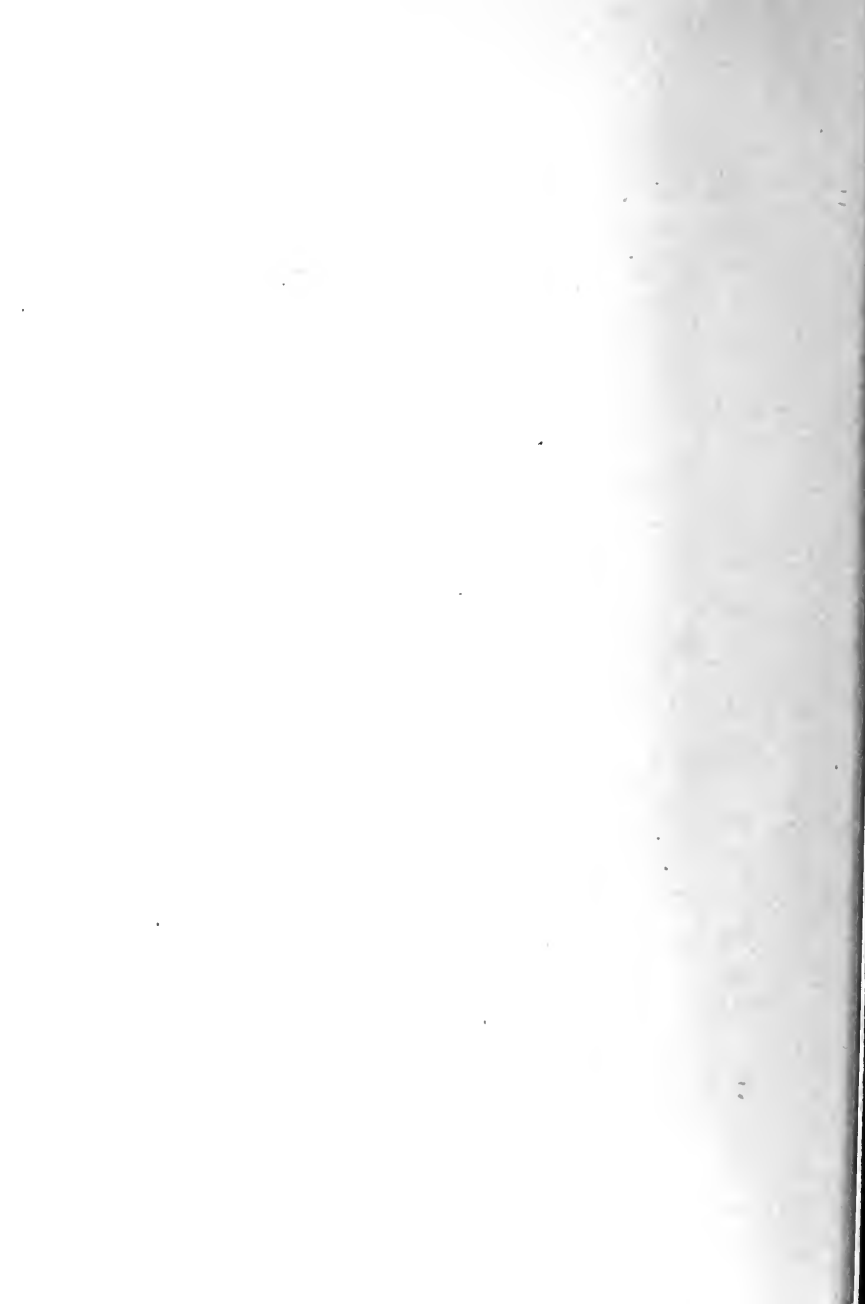
island *villeggiatura* splendid and sumptuous. Certainly he and his helpers succeeded in wresting from the climate an assent to all the changes, transformations, and vagaries they could invent, and in turning the alpine *non possumus* into a silent permission. As guests we delight in this characteristic of our host and proceed to enjoy our further explorations in his domain with redoubled zest.

An obliging guide will give the student visitor all necessary details of the grand palazzo, and a catalogue of the pictures is provided, which contains the names of painters and copyists, as the case may be. For the many tourist visitors, comprising all nationalities and tastes, a general survey of the palazzo will doubtless suffice.

From the grand staircase we are ushered through a bewildering succession of rooms, serving all manner of purposes and decorated in all manner of styles. There is a dining-hall, a throne-room, a royal bedchamber, a picture-gallery, a grand ballroom, and a variety of rooms devoted to conversation, billiards, music, besides many bedrooms, among these also the one in which Napoleon I. once slept. Though the picture-gal-



THE GARDEN OF ISOLA BELLA





## *Isola Bella*

lery is poor in masterpieces, the apartments are full of objects of value, and many of the rooms are rich in Genoese or Florentine furniture, costly marbles, Venetian glass, and a great profusion of medallions, vases, busts, and coats of arms.

The grotto galleries underneath the château are particularly curious and fantastic. Whatever may be the verdict of the visitor upon the shell patterns to be seen there, the imitation stalactite caves and the novel fancies of the designers, still there is room to admire the persistent enthusiasm of the builder of the château and of his assistants, who, together, so successfully set at defiance all the difficulties they encountered, in their determination to make of Isola Bella a beauty-spot according to their ideal, — and *sui generis*. In passing out of the building into the gardens a corridor is used, the walls of which are hung with seven Gobelins setting forth mythological subjects, and said to be unsurpassed by those of any other collection of Gobelins for richness of colour.

And so we find ourselves in the far-famed gardens of Isola Bella! They constitute a veritable park into whose restricted area the original designer sought to crowd so much

## *The Italian Lakes*

of horticultural and sylvan beauty, that perforce he was obliged to cause the island to bulge up in the centre and rise into a pyramid to the height of over one hundred feet above the lake surface, in ten tiers or terraces. The gardener had so much to say in his art and way, that he had to invent this method of expressing himself. Not otherwise can one explain the profusion of superimposed parterres and piazzas decorated with statues, rotundas, and belvederes, one more elaborate than the other, each with distinct characteristics,—and each determined not to be outdone by the others. There is the grove of Diana, the piazza of Hercules, the exotic garden, the grove of love, the grove of pines, the palm garden, the rose garden, the grove of Julia, the plateau of New Holland, and the grove of Elise. It is as though all these proofs of Italian garden-art were vying for some point of vantage, in order the better to be seen, and thus to be in position to give a louder and more conspicuous welcome to the visitor of the hour.

A mass of little paths carefully bordered lead maze-like from wonder to wonder. Here are tree-like camellias and oleanders,



IN THE GARDENS OF ISOLA BELLA



## *Isola dei Pescatori*

gigantic magnolias, myrtles and laurels, stately cedars and cypresses. Orange and lemon trees abound, and sprinkled about, so as to profit by the green background, are vases, grottos, and fountains. It is related that Napoleon I., strolling in the park, when he halted at Isola Bella on his way to the Italian plain, cut the ominous word *bataille* into the bark of a giant laurel-tree. Time has happily obliterated with its weather stains such effects as might once have seemed garish. If there is much vagary in the construction of Isola Bella, there is at least surprising merit in having hung these opulent gardens against the sky-line of the barren Alps and caused the naked rock to bloom.

## *Isola dei Pescatori*

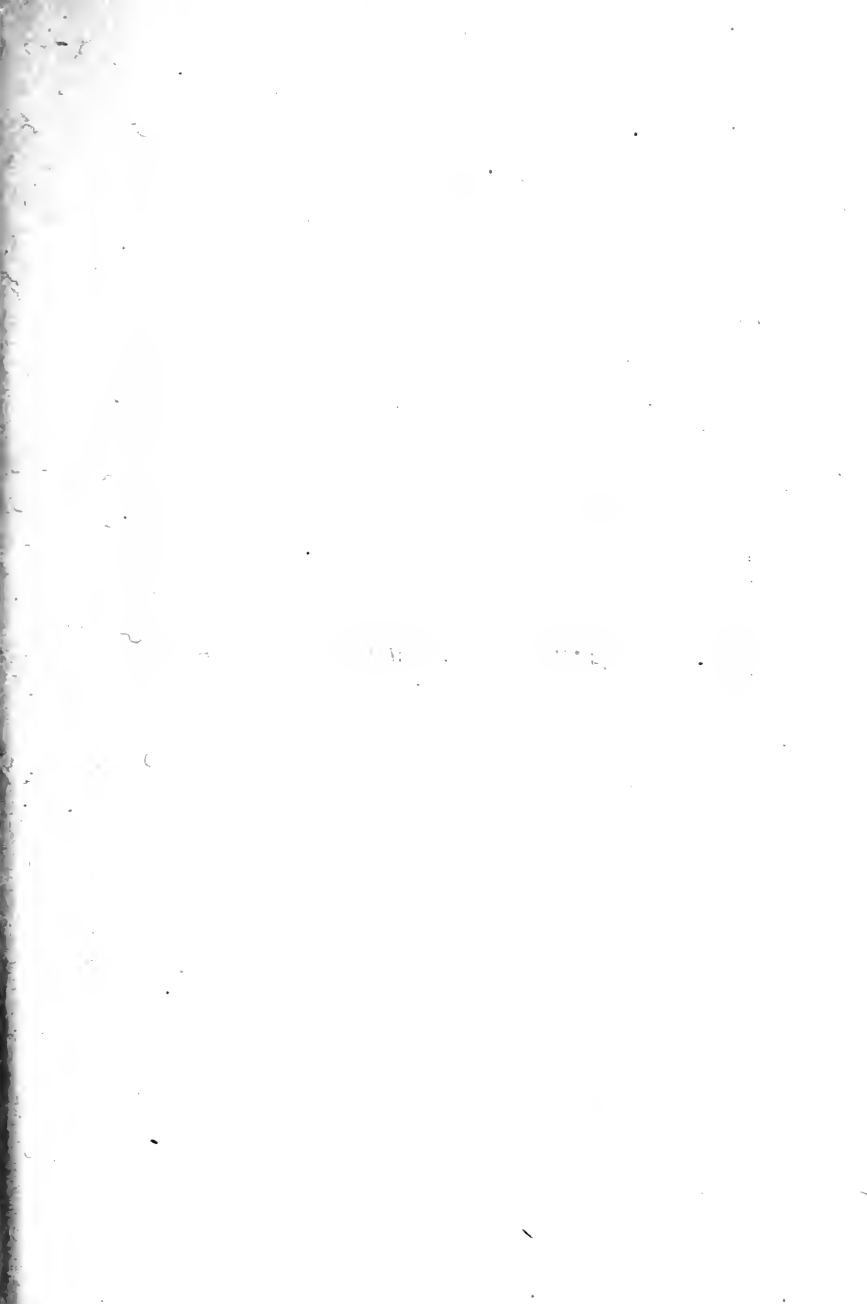
This "fisher-island" is exactly what its name would indicate. It contains neither palazzo nor hanging gardens, but this fact does not prevent it from being a favourite with the painters. It contains a medley of fishermen's homes of many colours, yellow, pink, or terra-cotta, that jostle each other to the very water's edge at the eastern end of the island. The shore is generally lined

## *The Italian Lakes*

with fishing-boats, painted black for the most part, though the writer recalls seeing one in bright blue. Fishing-nets are spread to dry on the grass at the western end of the island, which is reserved for them. A cream-coloured church tower rises above the brown-red roofs. Thus the fisher-island presents all its simple attractions at once to the eye, and is the rough diamond, the natural jewel, among the islands of the Bay of Pallanza. We wish it well in its lowly occupation and pass on knowing that the water-colourists will not overlook it.

### *Isola Madre*

The "mother island" derives its title from the fact that it was the first of the Borromean island possessions to be laid out in gardens of any description. It is not only the largest of them all, but also lies nearly in the centre of the Bay of Pallanza, thus enjoying a particularly commanding and conspicuous position. Here the same desire as on Isola Bella, to express much of the gardener's art upon a relatively small area, has resulted in the building of five terraces, surmounted, in this case, by a little-used

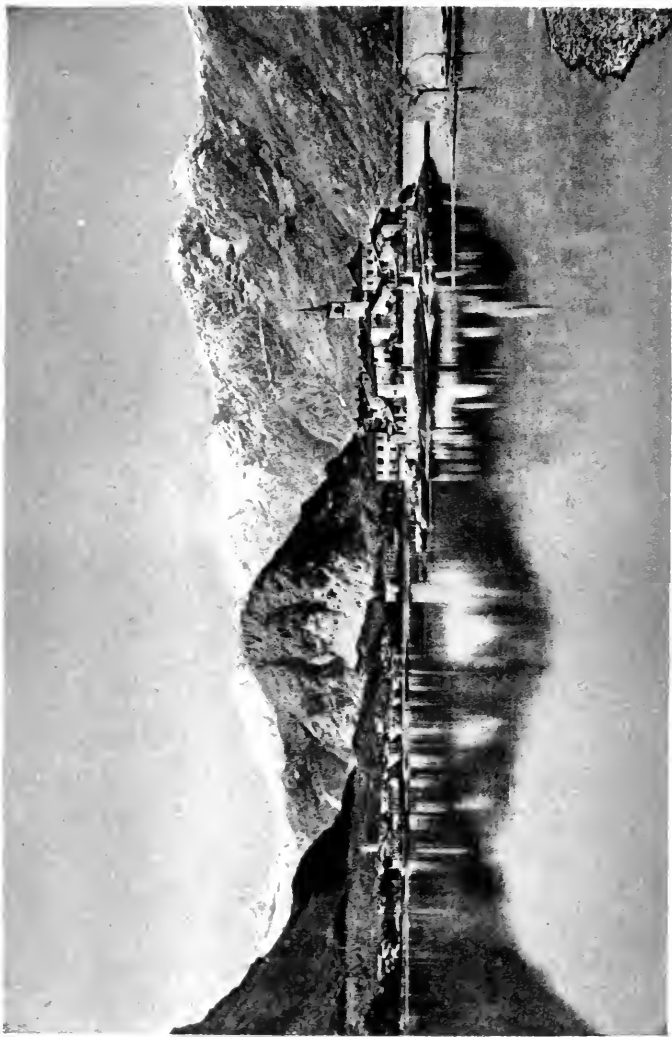


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**BAVENO AND ISOLA DEI PESCATORI**

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## *Isola Madre*

palazzo whose chief charm is its view over lake, shore, and mountain. Less artificial in arrangement than the gardens of Isola Bella, those of Isola Madre are generally found more in keeping with natural beauty as northern eyes are accustomed to see it. They are less crowded, and their orange and lemon trellises, the walled gardens, the cypresses, laurels, and pines have spread more at ease over a wider surface. The island is greatly admired by artists and, because not accessible by steamboat, draws to it particularly those who rejoice in its simple tranquillity.

Writing to his mother from Baveno (a favourite stopping-place of his), on August 24, 1854, Ruskin stated: "Architecture I can draw very nearly like an architect, and trees a great deal better than most botanists, and mountains rather better than most geologists, and now I am going actually to draw some garden for you, out of Isola Madre, and study some of its bee-haunted aloes tomorrow morning, if it be fine: it is sweet to see the aloe with two or three hives of bees about it, making its yellow blossoms yellower."

From the high-placed palazzo of Isola

## *The Italian Lakes*

Madre, as a point of vantage, the interplay of lights upon the water can be watched to particular advantage. Out beyond the borders of the island, an afternoon calm has enamelled the water a gentle turquoise blue, upon which the passing boats paint streaks in tints of green. There is a silken gloss of white where the sun strikes with full force. The wash of water-colours is in evidence rather than the solid look of oils. On the fresh water of the Italian lakes there is no habitual tumble of surf, no roar along the seaweed, for the water can be counted upon to stay pretty much at the same level, except at long intervals of time or in seasons of catastrophe. Hence there are no stretches of unsightly mud exposed by receding tides, but the well-trained water dances up to the lake walls and terraces, — splashes prettily, but advances no farther.

### *Isola San Giovanni*

Familiarly known as an *isolino*, because it is so small and clings so closely to mother land, San Giovanni presents little of special scenic interest to the tourist who has visited the larger islands of the group. Its vegeta-

## *Isola San Giovanni*

tion is luxuriant and it possesses a small villa. Historically it is of importance, because it was the site of a Roman *castellum* and of an early Christian church, and was the home of the nobles De Castello Barbavara, to whom, as already stated, the island along with Pallanza was ceded by Emperor Barbarossa in 1152.

As the boat glides homeward-bound, the fresh-water, soft-water look of the lake is unmistakable in the purity, clearness, and limpid placidity of the Bay of Pallanza. Later on it will be time enough for the regular breeze to draw down at close of day from distant heights of snow, through ravine and valley, into the great plain of Lombardy. On the way it will pass over Lago Maggiore and ruffle its surface, first into silvery streaks and then into kindly wavelets that mean no harm to men and things, but brighten the evening with the promise of a cool night. And about that time the nightingales will begin to sing their loveliest in the wonder gardens of the Borromeo Islands.

## CHAPTER V

LOWER LAGO MAGGIORE: ARONA, CARLO BORROMEO, FROM ARONA TO STRESA, ANTONIO ROSMINI - SERBATI, FROM BAVENO TO LAVENO

LAGO MAGGIORE can be approached from many sides, and so there is at all times a pleasant crisscross of tourists upon its waters. One of the principal tides of travel comes from Milan by rail and touches the lake at Arona, where steamboats are in waiting to make that famous journey up the lake, which is so full of joyous surprises, sudden transitions, and noble prospects. At least the steamboat time-tables begin the trip of lower Lake Maggiore with Arona, and it will not be out of order for us to do the same.

### *Arona*

The railroad from Milan traverses a flat and fertile plain, where vineyards, plantations of American corn, and rows of mul-

## *Arona*

berry-trees succeed each other for miles. Presently some poplars fluttering their silver-lined leaves to the breeze betray the presence of the Ticino. The river greets us after its long journey down the length of the lake. The station of Sesto Calende is passed and the lake bursts into view at Arona.

The little town has its big open square, its row of hotels, and its quay planted with shade-trees. Along the lake wall business-like black barges are loading and unloading coal, fishing-nets hang to dry, and white awninged rowboats ride on the wavelets made by the steamboat. Off to the north-east the crenelated castle of Angera, a fief of the family of Borromeo, gives a mediæval aspect to the landscape. Some wooded slopes contrast gently with the open fields.

The position of Arona at the outlet of the lake gave it importance and prestige even during the Roman era. It counts to-day as one of the most populous of the lake towns, and is active, not only in introducing travelers to the grandeur of Lago Maggiore, but also as an industrial centre. A tablet on the walls of the Hotel Reale states that Garibaldi stayed there in the year 1848. Historically speaking, Arona is chiefly notice-

## *The Italian Lakes*

able as the original seat of the family of Borromeo, whose ancestral castle, however, was destroyed by the French in 1797.

In a letter to his father in 1858, referring to Turner's picture, entitled "Arona, Lago Maggiore," Ruskin writes:

"I had made up my mind before arriving here to find Mr. Turner's port a thing of the past, and a beautiful new quay for steamers, with an 'embarcadère' opposite for the railroad, in its place. I thought myself therefore more fortunate to find the two towers still left, though the whole further side of the port, with its arches, has, just as I expected, been turned into a grand quay for the steamers. The near side of the port with the garden and trees must from the first have been drawn out of Turner's head, as there are large houses on that side (of the towers) which clearly date from the beginning of the last century. But the terrible roguery is in the hills. No such hills are, or ever were, in sight from Arona. They are gathered together, hill by hill, partly from the Battes of Oleggio, partly from above the town here, partly from half-way up the lake near Baveno, and then all thrown together in one grand imaginary chain."



## *Carlo Borromeo*

*Carlo Borromeo (1538 - 84)*

On the outskirts of Arona, above the vineyards and surmounting a slope of green, rises the colossal statue, in bronze, of Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, the most famous member of a family famous in the annals of Milanese territory. The statue with its pedestal is 113 feet in height and was erected in 1697. The figure is turned toward Milan. Carlo Borromeo's uncle, Cardinal de Medici, became Pope Pius IV., and shortly after the nephew was made Archbishop of Milan. He showed great energy in the administration of his diocese. In accordance with the decrees of the Council of Trent, he set about correcting the ecclesiastical irregularities in existence, first in the city of Milan, then in the country districts, in spite of much opposition on the part of those whose interests he had disturbed. During the plague which swept Milan and its surroundings, he displayed great zeal in visiting the sick, organizing relief, and taking such measures as the knowledge of the times deemed efficacious and necessary. Such acts endeared him to the people and caused his memory to be

## *The Italian Lakes*

specially cherished throughout the Italian lakes region.

### *From Arona to Stresa*

There is some scurrying aboard among the passengers, sailors, clad as neatly as those of an Atlantic liner, draw in a few last hawsers, the water churns and foams, and the steamboat leaves Arona on its joyous venture up the lake. The shores immediately rise higher and the slopes are seen to be dotted with hamlets from which Lombard campanili detach themselves. Stray, warm-weather clouds catch upon the hilltops, or trail from them like volcano smoke. The water, which at first looks green and shallow, gains in depth and turns blue. A delightful sense of growing freshness envelops the boat. The travellers on deck now use their field-glasses in order that no item of the expanding scene may escape them.

Whenever the boat stops, there is an interesting coming and going of passengers and sightseers at the landing-places. At every station *carabinieri* (country policemen) can be seen standing, two by two like twin sentinels, surveying the scene with benevolent



THE UBIQUITOUS TWIN *CARABINIERI* OF ITALY



## *From Arona to Stresa*

watchfulness. They are clad in the full panoply of the law, with cocked hats and red stripes, and, if the day be Sunday, they wear an extra cockade of red and blue, while their coat-tails take on further embroidered gorgeousness. At many places the boat does not dock, but slows down and receives passengers who come alongside in a rowboat with the postman and the bag of mail. There is a rapid exchange of passengers and mail-bags, a flying leap, and a sudden separation.

By degrees the lakeside villages of Meina, Lesa, and Belgirate are left behind, each provided with a tiny harbour and beautified by an array of villas, terraced gardens, trailing vines, loggias, and arbours. There are white houses with green blinds, others tinted yellow, pink, blue, or brick-red, the smallest excuse and the least provocation only being needed to cause these walls to blossom into colour. Once in awhile a ravine comes down to the water's edge, filled with chestnut-trees and leading the eye back inland to heights, where villages are momentarily revealed, hiding in the pockets of the hills. Lesa was for many years the place of residence of Alessandro Manzoni, author of "I Promessi Sposi" (see page 240).

## *The Italian Lakes*

After Belgirate there comes one of those complete changes so characteristic of all lakes lying under the scenic influence of the Alps. It is a change from low hills and vine-clad slopes to the sight of lofty mountains and the perspective of everlasting snows. As the corner is gradually turned, the headland of Castagnola appears with its dark trees setting off white hotels; Sasso del Ferro rears its summit boldly in the east; the great Bay of Pallanza opens wide and fair, with the Borromean Islands strung across it like so many jewels; and Monte Rosa glistens pure white upon the farther horizon. Everything on the way up from Arona seems to have led, by a well-studied *crescendo*, to this final burst of beauty, where the narrow arm of lower Lago Maggiore becomes in a moment a bay of singular splendour. On the way up, all the paraphernalia of Italian life and its stock properties have been passed in review, as the steamboat has glided in sight of the shore and made its stops,—and all this in order to enhance the effect and herald the glories of the Gulf of Pallanza.

Of the Borromean Islands, lying offshore between Stresa and Baveno, there is so much



DANCING ON THE QUAY AT STRESA





## *From Arona to Stresa*

to say that a special chapter has already been devoted to them in this book.

The town of Stresa stretches alongshore and leans against Monte Motterone for a background. It presents an appearance of much distinction, and outwardly, at least, leads a life full of calm strolling leisure. The grand hotel and the handsome villas are all provided with gardens in which the horticultural marvels of this exceptional region flourish with special success. But Stresa's principal claim to the attention of the polite public is due to the presence there of the villa of the Duchess of Genoa. This *villa ducale* is not exceptionally sumptuous nor elaborate in appearance, as ducal villas go, but it conveys the impression of great comfort and elegance, and the good people of Stresa consider themselves fortunate in having so welcome and beloved a guest in their midst.

At Stresa it is possible to make a pleasant sojourn and catch many side glimpses into the life of the people, which are necessarily excluded from a rapid round of the lake.

For example, some fine day you will awaken to find the quay in possession of merrymakers. Little booths have been

## *The Italian Lakes*

erected under the carefully trimmed line of shade-trees, and in the open space amusing couples are revolving gaily to the tune of a band. The stately *carabinieri* are on hand in full feather, and flags fly from the houses facing the water.

Sometimes, indeed, the *tramontana* wind bears down fiercely upon Stresa, clarifies the atmosphere to crystal purity, produces a veritable and formidable fresh-water surf, and bends the trees on the quay to a dangerous curve. Again, in the midst of the summer season, when those who speak the northern tongues have moved to cooler climes and the Italians of the cities have come to Stresa for their refreshing, an interesting regatta is held similar to the one at Como, in which the oarsmen manage gondola-shells with extraordinary dexterity, standing up and rowing forward.

As the steamboat glides near the Stresa shore, a flock of yellow sheep come pattering along the highway. They are of the long-legged Italian kind, and their shepherd is clad in homespun and carries a staff. The church-bells are ringing, and when the boat draws near, they may be seen performing strange antics in their lofty towers, stand-



SURF CAUSED BY THE *TRAMONTANA* WIND



## *Antonio Rosmini-Serbati*

ing on their heads and tumbling about joyously.

On the hill back of Stresa is a large white building which recalls the name of Antonio Rosmini-Serbati, the founder of the Institute of Charity.

### *Antonio Rosmini-Serbati (1797 - 1855)*

Rosmini, like his friend Manzoni, was of patrician birth. He was from Rovereto in Tyrol, hence, politically speaking, was born on Austrian soil.

There seems to be no question that the founder of the Institute of Charity (better known as the Order of Rosminians) was very precocious as a child. His biographers report that at five years of age he had a fair knowledge of the Bible; that his favourite game was to pretend being a hermit, in order to meditate upon the lives of the saints. Even his nurse seems to have expected him to astonish the world, for she carefully treasured up his baby-clothes, and would surrender them to no one until after Rosmini's death. Curiously enough, the boy, when sent to school, like Manzoni, showed a surprising degree of stupidity in his les-

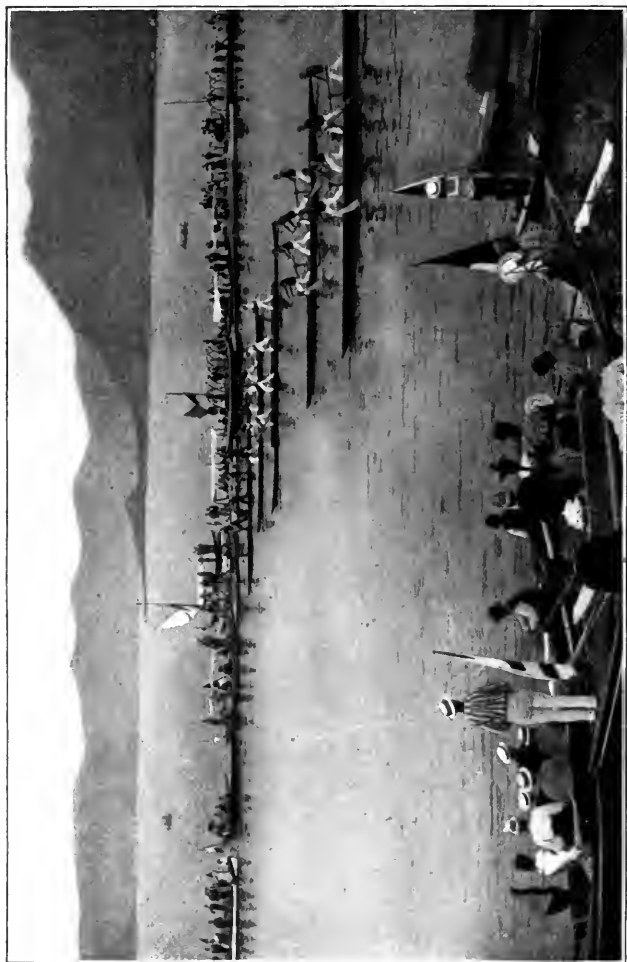
## *The Italian Lakes*

sons; while all the time, at home in his uncle's library, he read for amusement and inwardly digested the works of Thomas Aquinas and Augustine, thus forming the basis of his future philosophy.

He was sent to the University of Padua. From Padua he retired to Rovereto once more, there to continue his reading of the philosophers in retirement. The classic writers, the Church fathers, the mediæval schoolmen, the modern rationalists and positivists, — all were passed in review, — some 620 authors in all. A complete catalogue of his own works contains ninety-nine numbers. His "Sistema Filosofico" alone takes up more than forty volumes, purporting to be "a veritable encyclopædia of the human knowable, synthetically conjoined."

### *From Baveno to Laveno*

Baveno has long been a favourite resort with the English. It was there that Queen Victoria spent three weeks in April of the year 1879, in the superb Villa Clara belonging to Mr. Henfrey. Somewhat larger than Stresa, Baveno yet strongly resembles the former place in general appearance, in the



THE REGATTA AT STRESA





## *From Baveno to Laveno*

style of its dwellings and park-like gardens. It is known to the Italian world more particularly on account of its pink granite quarries, which have provided columns for some of Italy's greatest structures, and indeed have been in use since the time of the Romans. These quarries, and those of Montorfano, gleam and glare from afar, when the boat rounds the corner at Stresa, and in conjunction with the white houses of Baveno they form an excellent background to throw into relief the islands of Isola Bella and Isola dei Pescatori.

The boat now crosses over to Pallanza, to which place a separate chapter in this book has already been assigned; then, skirting the little island of San Giovanni and rounding the Punta della Castagnola, it reaches Intra, situated upon alluvial deposit between two mountain torrents. Hence the name, *intra* meaning "between."

If Pallanza is notable for its charms as a visitors' resort, Intra impresses one chiefly as a busy commercial place. It has a little harbour protected by high walls, where the shipping of its particular needs can take shelter when the north wind blows. There are factories belonging mostly to Swiss firms,

## *The Italian Lakes*

and much coal is needed, so that Intra may look a trifle grimy in comparison with its neighbours along the lake, but the artistic impulse is not stifled. Intra possesses no less than four public statues, one of Garibaldi, another of Victor Emmanuel, one of Colonel Simonetta to commemorate those who fell in the wars of independence, and another to a famous physician, Restellini. The place is an active and alert centre of thought, and by its energy is helpful in awakening some of the dormant capabilities for world-work among the population of Lago Maggiore. There is good grass-land in the neighbourhood; the small landholders and proprietors are also rather more numerous here than near most of the lakeside towns.

In Italy the agricultural land question is at present complicated by a great diversity of contracts between landlords, middlemen, tenants, and agricultural labourers. In the least fruitful or mountainous districts there are many peasant proprietors. The irrigated lands of the plain of Lombardy, which are extraordinarily fertile, are cultivated upon one plan, the vineyards of Piedmont upon another, and so throughout Italy down



THE HARBOUR OF STRESA



## *From Baveno to Laveno*

to Sicily, where the condition of the labourers may be said to leave most to be desired.

The road northward out of Intra, toward Oggebbio, is justly famous for some of the finest villa gardens on the lake, rich in camellias, magnolias, palms, and eucalypti, and the short walk to Pallanza is also especially repaying for the same reason. The many charming villas which have found a resting-place for themselves and their terraced gardens along the rocky shore display the greatest possible individuality. In order to obtain some idea of the skill and the sense of proportion in road-building which is so characteristic of Italian work of this kind, a leisurely stroll along this same road is full of delight. Such solidity, such constant repair, such care in grading, such a conquest of natural obstacles, and such glimpses the while over the lake, lapping the rocks below and stretching over to the farther shore, where Laveno lies expectant at the foot of Sasso del Ferro!

At length the boat touches at Laveno, which must be reckoned as a railroad centre of considerable importance, as things go in the region of the Italian lakes. At this point there is rail connection with Varese, Como,

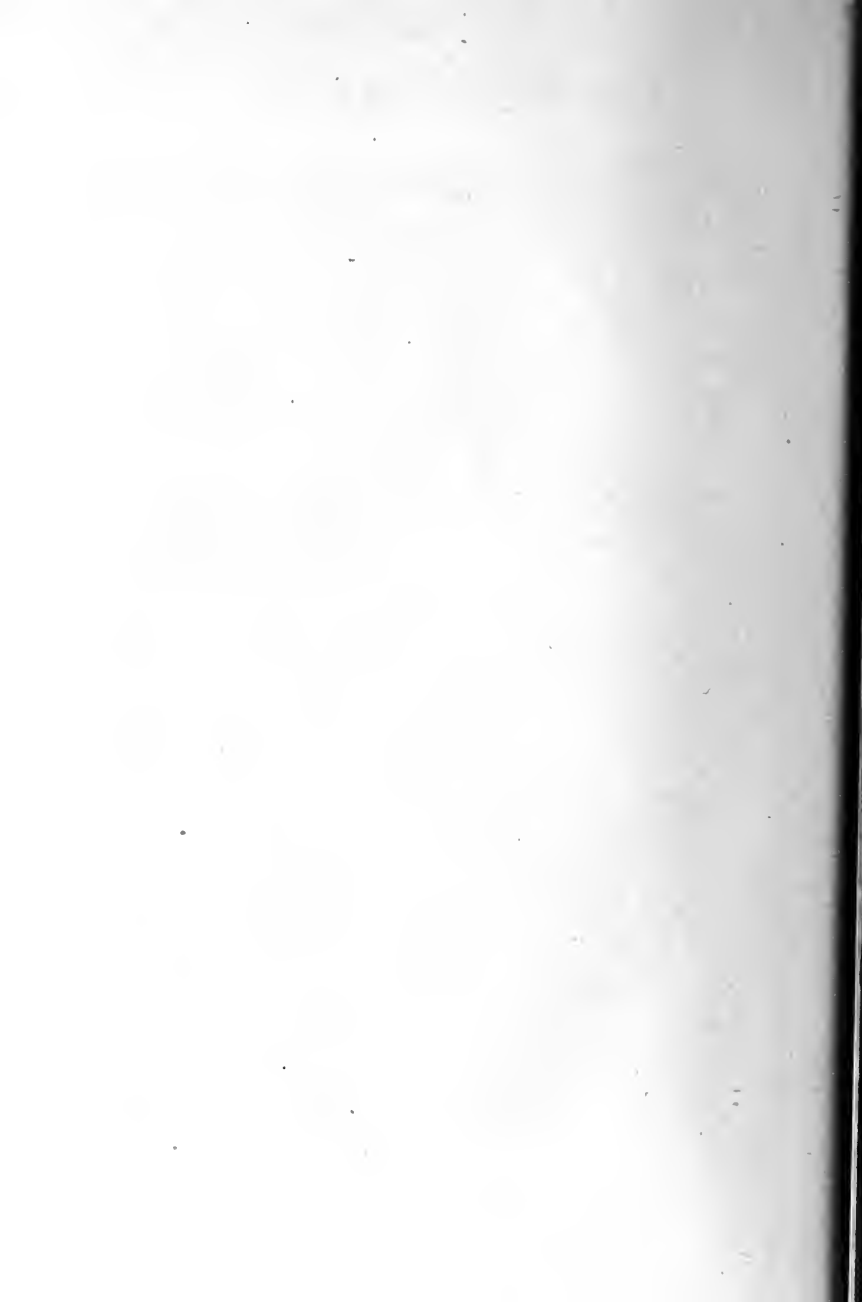
## *The Italian Lakes*

Milan, Novara, Genoa, and with the St. Gothard route into Switzerland. The bay occupies a certain strategic position with reference to the lake which did not escape the Romans and gave it temporary value in modern times to the Austrians, under whom Laveno became a military port and the seat of an arsenal. It was against Laveno that Garibaldi directed an unsuccessful assault in 1859. The fortifications have long since been razed, and to-day their site serves chiefly as a point of vantage for a superb view over lake and mountains. The china manufactured at Laveno enjoys some reputation in Italy, but for the travelling public the place is chiefly prized as a point of departure, as a through station. From here the excursion up Sasso del Ferro is generally undertaken, also the visit to Santa Caterina del Sasso, a little church perched in a seemingly inaccessible position, high above the lake.

From a scenic point of view this eastern side of Lago Maggiore has the special advantage of facing, not only the great open Gulf of Pallanza with its islands, but also the distant snow slopes of Monte Rosa, so that when the steamboat finally touches at Laveno



THE QUARRIES OF BAVENO





## *From Baveno to Laveno*

and leaves us upon the quay, we are tempted to pause before we undertake to see more. There is a desire to draw breath, until the succession of extraordinary beauties which have marked this tour of lower Lago Maggiore can be disentangled one from another, arranged in some kind of order, sorted and labelled, their relative values ascertained, and our special tastes consulted.

In the meantime, there is a sense that joyous memories are being garnered for winter days in distant northern homes, where the sun does not shine as often, nor the water sparkle quite as gaily.

## CHAPTER VI

### UPPER LAGO MAGGIORE: THE LAKE OF LOCARNO, BERNARDINO LUINI

THE Romans called Lago Maggiore by the beautiful name of *Lacus Verbanus*, a name suggestive of vernal freshness, even though etymologists may not grant the linguistic inference. This superb sheet of water is about thirty-seven miles long, and varies from one and a half to three miles in width. The principal and regular winds are the *tramontana*—which in fair weather blows in the morning from the north—and the *inverna*, from the south in the afternoon. These winds, on the other Italian lakes, are variously called *tivano* or *sover* and *breva* or *ora*. The winds known as *maggiore* and *mergozzo* are occasional, uncertain, and frequently violent. There are many species of fish in the lake, so that fishing is one of the regular occupations of the lacustrine population. As in Lake Como, so in this lake, the

## *Upper Lago Maggiore*

little fish called *agone* is a special favourite for the table. The river Ticino, after busy-ing itself in giving a name to the only Italian-speaking Canton of Switzerland, plunges into the upper end of the lake, traverses its entire length, clarifying its own waters of silt in the flow southward, and issues forth at Arona in tints of pale transparent green, to wind its way to the river Po, and thus into the Adriatic.

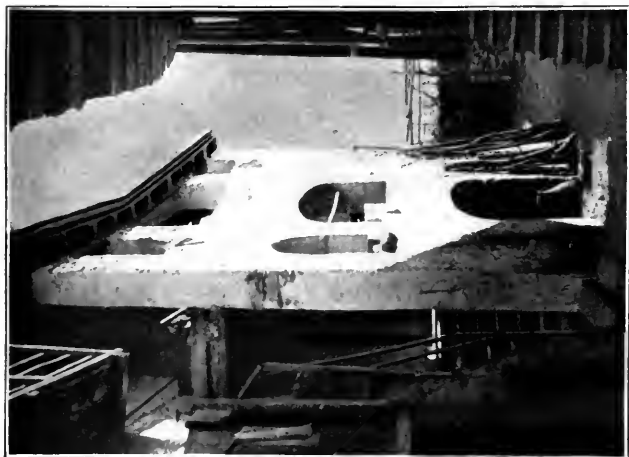
Historically speaking, there is not over-much to record about the ancient days of Lago Maggiore. Special incidents in modern history have been and will be mentioned in connection with certain places on its shores, as the reader is invited to visit these places themselves. In a general way, it may be stated that the Romans founded numerous settlements by the waterside, and that they were succeeded by the Longobards. Upon the destruction of the power of the latter, the usual manifestations of feudalism made their appearance. The Visconti, the Sforza, and the Borromeo families of Milan played conspicuous rôles in turn and acquired control over the more desirable positions along the lake. Of these families the Counts of Borromeo have retained numerous posses-

## *The Italian Lakes*

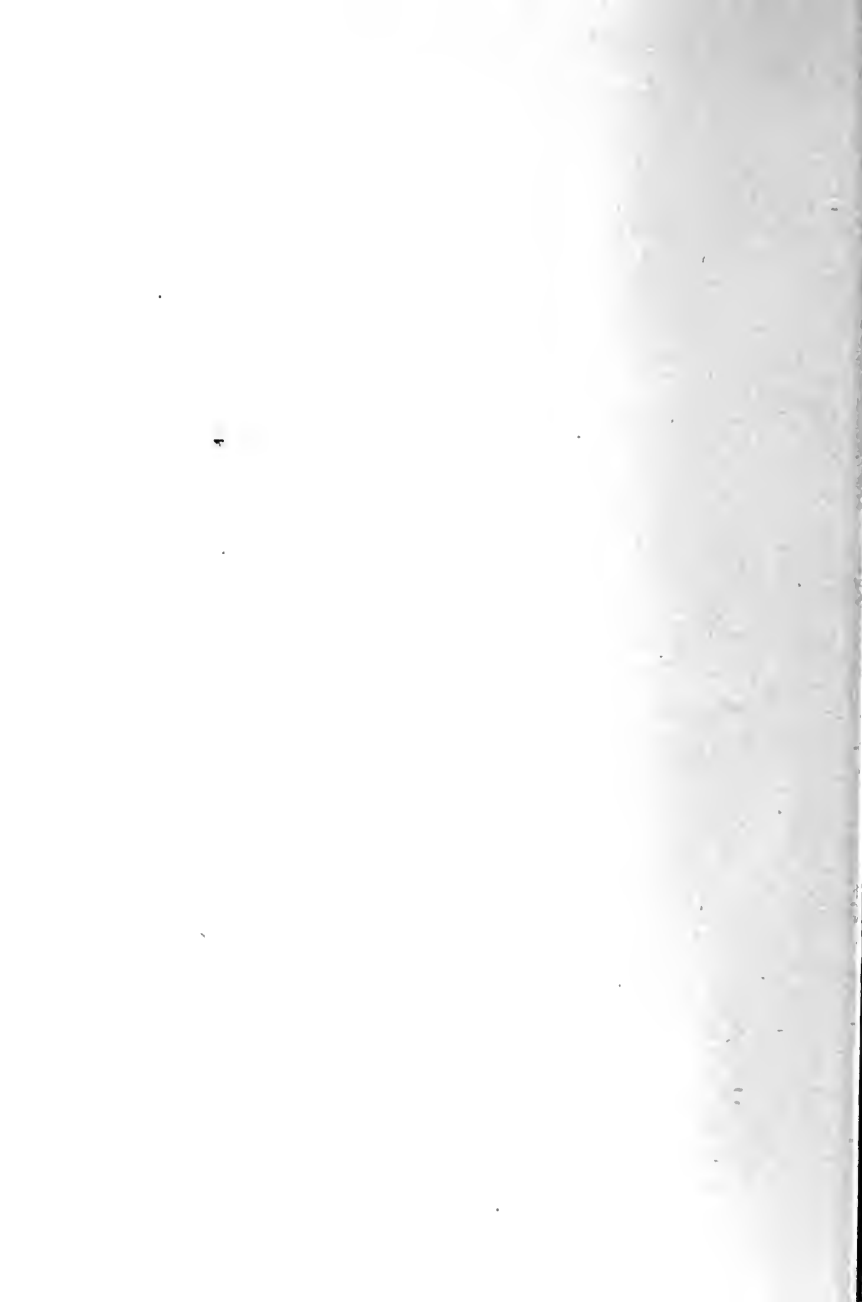
sions to this day, as has already been indicated in preceding chapters; and now the lake and its shores for some nine miles down from Locarno belong to the Swiss Canton of Ticino and all the rest of Lago Maggiore to Italy.

### *The Lake of Locarno*

The northern half of Lago Maggiore has a quality of its own distinct from the lower lake. In comparison with the steamboat trip from Arona to Laveno, that from Locarno to Laveno may be styled a mighty *diminuendo*, dropping from the alpine heights into the lower levels of the plain. But the interest in men and things, in the beauty of the lakeside towns and their villas, gardens, trees, and flowers, far from diminishing, grows with every advance made southward toward the Gulf of Pallanza, spanning the distance from Laveno to Feriolo. The upper end of the lake is enclosed by lofty ridges, partly wooded, and is relatively alpine in its characteristics. The very colour of the water shares the spring-time freshness of the slopes, and gleams sweetly and profoundly green. The journey south-



OLD HOUSES IN LOCARNO



## *The Lake of Locarno*

ward also means a political transition from the republic of Switzerland to the kingdom of Italy, as the custom-house officer will not fail to remind us. But whether the approach be from the snows of the Alps or from the plains of Lombardy, Lago Maggiore wins instant recognition as a link between the extremes of natural scenery symbolized by peak and plain; it turns its prettiest graces toward the stern mountains and its most invigorating and energetic airs to the lowlands.

It may be of interest to tourists arriving at the borders of Lago Maggiore from Lake Luzern over the St. Gothard to know that the former lake, on the southern slope of the Alps, is about twice the size of the latter situated on the northern side.

Before reaching Locarno, the traveller has doubtless already recognized the nearness of Italy, and in Locarno itself this impression is greatly enhanced. There is the clatter of women's little wooden sandals on the cobblestones. A donkey on the white highway emits a long-drawn *he-haw* — *he-haw*, that seems to penetrate through the stone walls, climb the terraces where repose the vineyards, cross the river, and burst over the

## *The Italian Lakes*

whole countryside. The red umbrellas of Italy make their appearance in the market-place, and the arcades are filled with a new and special kind of animation, to which the northern side of the Alps is a stranger. If it is spring, the almond blossoms and the peach-trees in bloom on the outskirts tell of warmer climes, while the exotics in the hotel gardens raise an expectancy of further wonders to come.

The author will not stop here to describe Locarno at length, having already devoted some space to this delightful subject in his "Romance and Teutonic Switzerland," but a further word or two of appreciation may here be pardoned. Locarno is advantageously situated, not only at the head of the lake, but also at the outlet of long and populous valleys from the north and west, such as Val Verzasca, Val Centovalli, Val Onsernone, and especially the Val Maggia, rich in scenic variety, with the village of Bignasco as a favourite stopping-place. A short walk to the Ponte Brolla will initiate the traveller into the special beauties of the landward surroundings of Locarno and make him wish for more. The outskirts are plentifully sown with little villages perched on





BIGNASCO, VAL MAGGIA



## *The Lake of Locarno*

terraces amid graceful vineyards and southern arbours. Quaint houses, distinguished by arches and roofed with red tiles, cluster close together in these villages, as though still frightened by feudal enemies or anxious to save all available soil for growing ground and fruitful foothold.

Locarno's *piazza del mercato*, or marketplace, is an excellent spot for studying typical local character. Special markets are held on every alternate Thursday. The country carts by land, and the boats by water, bring men, women, children, and produce to this common meeting space. The wicker-work baskets or hods carried on the back are everywhere in evidence,—the hods which serve a multitude of varied purposes in the domestic and agricultural economy of these good people. Once in awhile an ox-cart swings lazily through the crowd with its gentle, large-eyed beasts displaying coats of cream colour or rich brown.

High above Locarno looms the church of the Madonna del Sasso, and alongshore rises the square old tower of San Querico. Down at the harbour, the sloping paved shore is lined with white awninged boats of ancient pattern and archaic model. Among them

## *The Italian Lakes*

lie some black barges, with huge square sails flapping loosely in the air, perhaps to dry after the last shower. In between the boats, wherever there is a vacant spot on the shore, the family washing is being done by the women who scrub and slap their linen noisily, and call loudly to each other to overtop the clamour of their occupation. Those who have finished their work pack the wet clothing into baskets which they lift dexterously on to their heads, and with many last words to those that remain, they swing off under their loads like living *Caryatides*. Others carry the washing in the ubiquitous hods on their backs, and though they are obliged to bend over, they can still fire a parting verbal shot with unabated skill.

This may be interesting in its way, but there is better yet to come, so let the reader, impatient to be off, obey the musical ring of the bell, which, by some blessed provision, hangs in the bow of every steamboat on the lake, and, stepping aboard, make the trip of the upper lake.

As the boat moves out, the portion of Lago Maggiore known as the Lake of Locarno seems to be enclosed by the mountains, and all egress shut off toward the south by



SAN QUIRICO



MADONNA DEL SASSO



## *The Lake of Locarno*

a projecting headland, the delta of the torrent Maggia; but further progress discloses the rest of Lago Maggiore lying serene on the farther side, and growing more blue with the distance. The eastern shore lies cool and shaded under the great range of Gambarogno. The stations of Magadino, Ascona, and Gerra succeed each other and bring us in sight of the two islands of Brissago, one with the ruins of a church and the other marked by a dwelling. Then comes Brissago itself, the last place of importance to be reached before the Italian frontier claims our attention with its imaginary line. At Brissago the southern vegetation becomes more pronounced, shining rich and glossy amid pretty country-houses, while a group of cypresses in sombre green point skyward near the church. It is said that it has been the custom for many men from Brissago to emigrate as cooks into the wide world, and that some of them have become proprietors of well-known hotels.

Cannobio, at the outlet of the great Val Cannobino, through which Domo d'Ossola can be reached, is another enterprising townlet on the western bank. It is at this point that the swift little steamboats of the Italian

## *The Italian Lakes*

customs service are stationed, which watch the Swiss portion of Lago Maggiore for smuggling, just as similar ones perform the same service against the Austrian portion of Lago di Garda. They look to be formidable craft, these alert *torpedinieri*, and with their search-lights command lake and shore also at night. The boat now crosses to Maccagno, and on the way thither our first view is obtained of two further islands, variously called the Castelli di Cannero, or Isole Vitaliano, and now owned by the Borromeo family. Their ruins fit the tale which is told of them, namely, that at the opening of the fifteenth century they became the headquarters of five brigand brothers, Mazzarda by name, who terrorized the whole lake district until the ducal Visconti of the day besieged and destroyed their robber castle. These rocky and sombre islands are in striking contrast with the suave loveliness of the lake shore which forms their background.

After leaving Maccagno, the view toward the south broadens into a grand perspective which reaches as far as Stresa, Isola Bella, and the noble background of Monte Motterone. In the meantime the St. Gothard railroad line, which on the eastern shore





THE MARKET - PLACE OF LOCARNO



WASHERWOMEN IN THE HARBOUR OF  
LOCARNO



## *Bernardino Luini*

has steadily flanked our progress down the lake, becomes especially conspicuous, and at Luino steamer and train meet to make convenient connections for Lago Lugano, by way of steam-tramway to Ponte Tresa, and for the Italian cities of the plains or the Swiss summer resorts north of the St. Gothard.

Indeed Luino is a sort of an international crossroads, and possesses an imposing railroad station to emphasize the fact. The tourist who does more than pass through the place is repaid, not only by the special attractions of the water-front, including a well-shaded quay, but also by the historical and artistic associations. The very name of Luino recalls that of the gentle, idyllic fresco painter, Bernardino Luini, who was born here in the latter part of the fifteenth century.

### *Bernardino Luini (1470 - 1530)*

It is a fact greatly regretted by Prof. Uberti Giansevero, in his "Guida Generale Ai Grandi Laghi Subalpini," that no one has erected a memorial to the great painter in his native town, and that writer even doubts Lu-

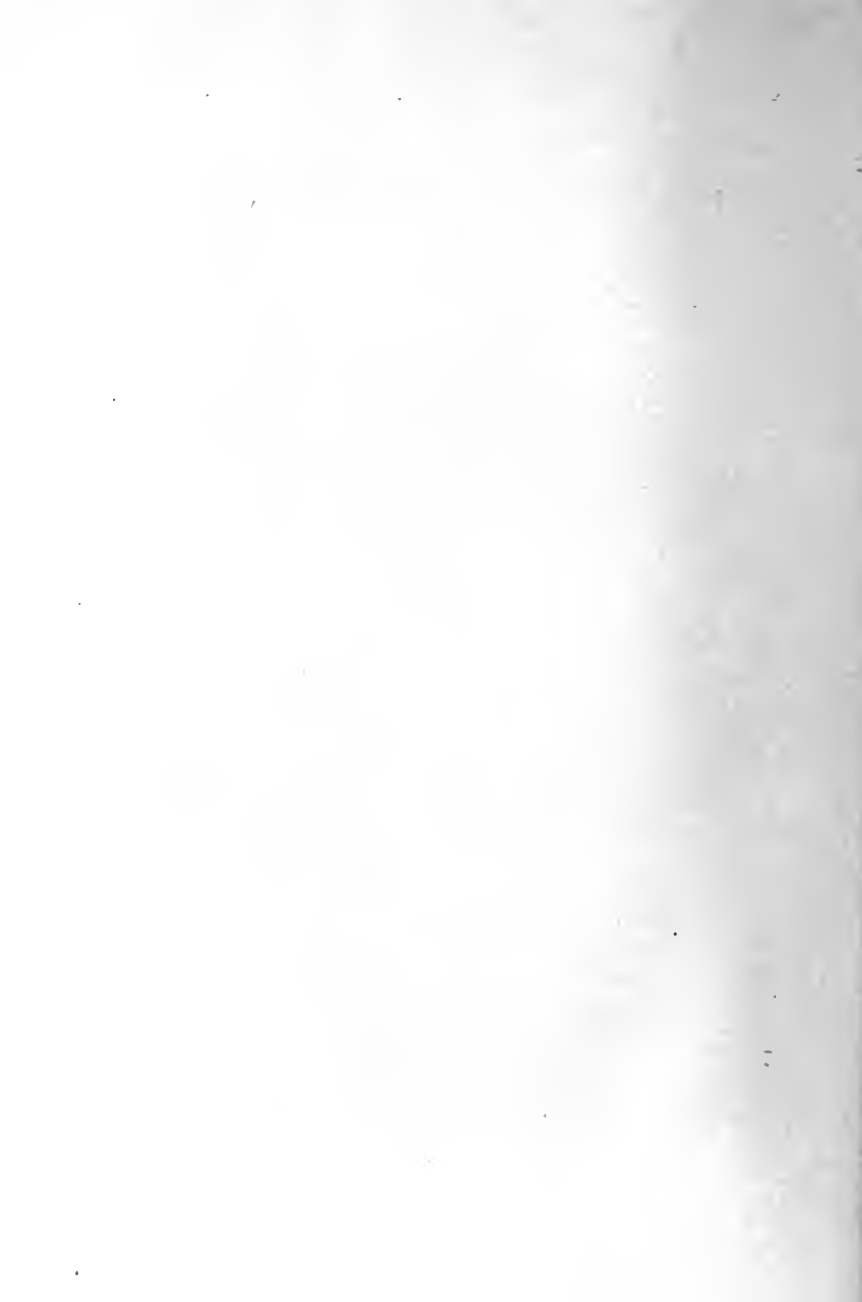
## *The Italian Lakes*

ini's authorship of the few frescoes in Luino, generally ascribed to him, both in the church of St. Peter's there and on the walls of the Albergo della Posta. Yet it is pleasant to know of the atmosphere in which a painter grows to his art. Writing of Luini in connection with Luino, T. W. M. Lund, in his charming "Como and Italian Lake-land," states: "There he was born, from that little town he took his name, and in that wide scene of hill and air and water blent in such perfect harmonies, he formed his earliest inspiration and learnt the truest lessons of his art."

In order to find Luini's works, we must travel to other parts of Italian lake-land, to Lugano, Saronno, and Como, and farther still to Milan, where the famous Ambrosian Library has a special Sala del Luini, and the no less famous Brera gallery has hung his frescoes on the walls of its vestibules and corridor. Luini was a poet like many others of the great Italian artists, and wrote a treatise on painting. His fame has grown with time. Ruskin has expressed admiration for him in some of his most illuminating pages, and John Addington Symonds has written enthusiastically and instructively of his sin-



AFTER THE MARKET OF LOCARNO



## *Bernardino Luini*

gular grace, simplicity, sweetness, and directness. It should be said that Luini is no longer held to have been a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci, though some of his works were at one time actually ascribed to the latter.

In 1867 a monument to Garibaldi was erected on the lake-front of Luino, to commemorate his independent efforts against Austria, organized from this point in 1848, and since the shores of the region of the Italian lakes are conspicuously dotted with the statues of this great forefighter in the Italian struggle for independence and unity, and many localities resound with his name, the reader will find it useful to refresh the memory with some of the salient facts in Garibaldi's career. With this in view, the author has furnished a brief sketch of Garibaldi in the next chapter. This sketch makes no claim to special critical research, but simply relates the story of his life as commonly recorded.

After leaving Luino the steamboat passes the Isole Cannero, already described, stops at Cannero itself, crowned with vineyards and orchards, passes Oggebbio, Ghiffa, and Porto Valtravaglia, and so reaches Laveno,

## *The Italian Lakes*

a convenient point from which to take the steamboat for the tour of lower Lago Maggiore.

In curious opposition to the steamboats, we pass primitive stone barges propelled by oars with auxiliary sails. One such is moored to the shore, taking on its load. Presently this task is done, and we see the oarsmen in their places for the start down the lake. So long and heavy are the oars that their full sweep cannot well be used; hence the oarsmen are obliged to stand, then take a few steps in the boat as they catch the water, and so, with a final jerk, they succeed in putting some motion into the clumsy barge. Wind permitting, the square sails are hoisted to aid the oars. The progress is not rapid, and yet "slow but sure" will reach Arona in time.

Again, as the steamboat crosses over to Laveno from west to east, the splendour of Monte Rosa and the Simplon Mountains bursts into view, drawing the eye from the immediate foreground and its intense, terraced cultivation, its oleanders, myrtle-trees, cypresses, and palms, off and up to the imperishable purity of the snow not made with hands.





A STONE BARGE ON LAGO MAGGIORE



*Bernardino Luini*

Here the formal Latin sense of proportion has produced architectural gardens and roads of masonry; there the mountains, in a very exuberance of freedom, proclaim an untrammelled arrangement of forest, slope, thicket, and flower, based on the needs and the desires of each.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE THREE LIBERATORS: GARIBALDI, MAZZINI, AND CAVOUR

THE three patriots who contributed by their labours more than any other Italians toward the independence and unification of Italy were all associated, during a portion of their lives at least, with the region of the Italian lakes. References to them crop up here and there, as the traveller makes his delightful rounds, and local reminiscences of them serve to explain modern Italy in the making, undergoing its national *risorgimento*.

On the shores of Lakes Maggiore, Como, and Garda the name of Garibaldi awakens echoes both of victory and defeat. From 1848 to 1866 Lugano was often the headquarters of Mazzini, whence he issued his ringing appeals in the struggle for freedom. At Stresa, on Lake Maggiore, Cavour is reported to have thought out his wonderful

## *Giuseppe Garibaldi*

plans of political reorganization, and in the meantime, being greatly interested in the economic revival of his native country, helped to place the first steamboat on the lake. Thus the three men who have not inaptly been called respectively the knight errant, the prophet, and the organizer of Italian unity, have spread the story of their noble endeavour over the region to which this book is devoted, and brief sketches of their careers will be found useful. No attempt is here made to supply the reader with critical biographies of an intimate or strictly analytical nature, but the generally accepted facts have been placed in narrative form to speak for themselves.

### *Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807 - 82)*

A list of the mere incidents in Garibaldi's life presents so adventurous and kaleidoscopic a picture that it is hardly necessary to emphasize the salient points in order to attract attention to his career. Born in Nice, he made several voyages in his youth as a sailor. In 1833 and 1834 he took part in the movement of "Young Italy," organized by Mazzini to liberate and unite Italy.

## *The Italian Lakes*

Driven into exile for taking part in an attempt to seize Genoa, he made his way to South America and took part in revolutionary movements there. His activity as a guerilla warrior and privateer in that part of the world earned him the title of "the hero of Montevideo." The outbreak of the war between Austria and Sardinia in 1848 called him back to Italy, where he fought in Lombardy against the Austrians. It was at this time that he and his volunteers performed some notable feats against the Austrians along the Swiss frontier, at Luino, and elsewhere. Then he took part in the defence of Rome against the French.

But the Italians lost the battle of Custoza, the Lombardo-Venetian lands were subjected anew to Austria, and the defence of Rome finally failed. Then Garibaldi made his escape to San Marino, thence to Chiavari in Liguria, to Tunis, and finally to the island of Maddalena, near which lies the islet of Caprera, where he later spent so many years of his life. He went to the United States and worked for awhile on Staten Island, New York, as a candle-maker. Later he became ship captain and prospered there in his business. On his return to Italy,

## *Giuseppe Garibaldi*

in 1854, he purchased the northern part of Caprera and made it his home, until the outbreak of the war of France and Sardinia against Austria, in 1859, brought him forth again from his retirement. During that year and the next he saw much service against Austria. He organized his volunteers under the name of the "*cacciatori delle Alpi*," crossed the Ticino eleven days before the French, and fought through the whole of the Lombard campaign, which was signalized by the victory of the French and Italians at Magenta and San Martino (Solferino). He rendered especially valuable service at Varese and Como.

After the peace preliminaries of Villafranca, against the terms of which he protested strongly, Garibaldi organized the "*cacciatori degli Apennini*" in order to liberate Rome; but not receiving permission from Victor Emmanuel for this enterprise, he turned his attention to Sicily, at that time forming with Naples the kingdom of the Two Sicilies. He embarked upon an expedition which proved to be the most remarkable as well as the most fruitful of his many bold ventures. In May of 1860, with one thousand volunteers, he landed at Marsala in

## *The Italian Lakes*

Sicily, marched to Palermo, and thereafter, by brilliant and skillful generalship, aided by a constantly swelling number of recruits to his standard, broke the power of the Neapolitan king both on the island and mainland, and entered Naples in triumph, where he was proclaimed dictator of the Two Sicilies. Victor Emmanuel thereupon invaded Neapolitan territory from the north and joined Garibaldi. As soon as the Two Sicilies had been united to the Italian kingdom under Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi once more retired to Caprera. He made two further unsuccessful attempts upon Rome, in 1862 and 1867. In the first he was defeated and wounded at Aspromonte; in the second he was made prisoner at Mentana. After each attempt he was liberated and then returned to Caprera.

When the Austro-Prussian war broke out in 1866, with the participation of Italy on the side of Prussia, Garibaldi and his volunteers advanced into the Austrian Trentino, where they gained the only victories on the Italian side in this campaign. After the defeat of Austria by Prussia, Venice was ceded to Italy at the request of Prussia, at the Peace of Prague. In the meantime Gari-



## *Giuseppe Garibaldi*

baldi, in 1864, had paid a visit to England, where he was received with the greatest enthusiasm as a popular hero. Garibaldi also participated in the Franco-Prussian War, on the side of the French, confining his movements to Dijon and Autun. His volunteers even gained a slight victory over the Germans by beating off a body of Prussian Pomeranians near Dijon. He returned once more to Caprera after this enterprise, and in 1875 was elected member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies.

The admiration in which he is held by his fellow countrymen is sufficiently evidenced by the multitude of statues which they have raised to him in almost every city and town from end to end of the beautiful peninsula. Through the generosity of English friends he became proprietor of the whole island of Caprera.

Ever constant to the ideal of his youth, namely, the unity of the Italian-speaking race, he pursued his purpose with whole-souled devotion, and by reason of the peculiar picturesqueness of his revolutionary methods he looms up as the central popular figure in the struggle for Italian independence.

## *The Italian Lakes*

*Giuseppe Mazzini (1805 - 72)*

The man who figured preëminently as the agitator in the struggle for Italian independence was born in Genoa, was well educated and chose the profession of law. He early became interested in various projects for liberating the whole peninsula and uniting it under one government, and with this purpose in view organized the "Young Italy" movement, in which Garibaldi also played a temporary part. When Charles Albert came to the throne of Sardinia, Mazzini addressed a notable appeal to him to place himself at the head of a national movement. A decree of banishment was thereupon issued against him, and he went into hiding in Marseilles, whence he continued to issue stirring writings which affected the whole of Europe. In 1834 he organized an unsuccessful invasion of Savoy. During the next two years he made his residence in Switzerland, and it was in Bern that he drew up his famous "Pact of Fraternity." But banished even from Switzerland, he went to live in London, and then in 1848 returned to Italy to take part in the war between Austria and Sardinia. He was associated with Garibaldi in the

## *Count Camillo Benso di Cavour*

attempt to keep the war alive along the shores of the Italian lakes and in the valleys of the Alps after Milan had capitulated. He was also prominent in the unsuccessful attempt of 1849 to maintain a republic in Rome.

Returning to London, Mazzini was occupied during the next few years in planning various risings in Italy. Like Garibaldi, he protested strenuously against the cession of Savoy and Nice to France, agreed to at the peace preliminaries of Villafranca in 1859. He supported Garibaldi in his expedition to Sicily. During his later years he lived for awhile in Switzerland, especially at Lugano, then in Pisa, and finally he returned to Genoa, his native city, where his great services in the struggle for Italian independence made him greatly respected and beloved by all, and at his death he was deeply mourned by a grateful nation, which his incessant and persistent devotion had largely helped to create.

## *Count Camillo Benso di Cavour (1810 - 61)*

The diplomat of the *risorgimento* was born in Turin of aristocratic ancestry and in an

## *The Italian Lakes*

atmosphere of wealth and refinement. At the age of ten he was sent to a military academy, and in the course of time his military career began at Genoa. He is reported to have been genuinely disturbed at an early age about the disorganized condition of the nation, and to have spoken unguardedly about affairs at court. In consequence of his utterances he found himself constrained to resign from the army, and thereafter quietly sought for the means by which Italy could be united and made free. For sixteen years he held aloof from public affairs, watching in private life for the right way to manifest itself, and feeling himself out of sympathy both with the conservatives and the conspirators. In the meantime he occupied himself with agriculture and economic improvements, and with studying foreign countries, especially France and England. Of the latter he always remained a genuine admirer.

It was not until 1848 that Cavour came to the front and publicly took his position as a patriot who was ready and capable to help Italy in her hour of rejuvenation. He united with others in instituting a paper in Turin called *Risorgimento*, and in the Sardinian chamber took the position of middle

## *Count Camillo Benso di Cavour*

ground, which seemed to him more likely to lead to definite results, but this made him popular with neither side and required great moral courage on his part. In the course of time, the two extremes in public opinion tended to discredit themselves, and Cavour was able to see the fruits of his practical diplomacy in actual gains of territory and in a centralized government. He was premier of Sardinia from 1852 to 1861, and is credited with having arranged with Napoleon III. the war of 1859.

During his career he saw Italy rise from a dismembered and disjointed conglomeration of petty states, filled with contradictory opinions, to a condition wherein, with the exception of Venice and the Papal States, the whole peninsula was united under a central executive power and was likewise in possession of representative government. To the final complete consolidation of Italy in later years under one sovereign, the painstaking, persevering work of Cavour and his characteristic qualities of diplomacy seem to have been virtually indispensable, though he did not live to see Rome made the capital of his native land.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MONTE MOTTERONE

LEST any soothing languor or lethargy of the Gulf of Pallanza overtake the visitor and mar the keenness of his enjoyment, it may be well for him to do his climbing into the heights pretty promptly upon arrival, and to attack the noble points of view with ready energy and buoyancy. Monte Motterone and Sasso del Ferro are the giant sign and finger posts of lower Lago Maggiore, pointing from their exalted tops in every direction to the marvels of this region, — northward to the snow peaks, southward to the plains of Piedmont and Lombardy, and close at hand to all the details and the exquisite charms of the subalpine world, clustered profusely at the very feet of these mountains.

For the present let Monte Motterone, also written Mottarone, suffice.

It is early in June. Along the lake-front of Baveno and Stresa the gardens are in their



PICTURESQUE BARN AT CAMPINO





## *Monte Motterone*

full splendour and richness. Roses are there and camellias; the myrtle and the pomegranate leaves reflect the light. As we mount the path leads through great chestnut groves and vineyards, by rustic villages and stone barns covered with thatched roofs, up into the open fields, and finally upon the undulating pastures that reach to the summit and make of this whole mountain *massif*, lying between Lakes Maggiore and Orta, a vast cattle range and dairying district. Up there are real *alps*, serene, carpeted with the greenest grass and the sweetest flowers and swept by the balmiest of airs.

There are several routes by which the top may be reached. One may start from Baveno and pass by Romanico, Campino, Someraro, Levo, and the Alpe del Giardino to the hotel near the summit; while another favourite path goes from Stresa and joins the former at Someraro.

It is to be hoped that, as you pass through Campino, you may have sight of one of the barns there, built of mountain rubble and mortar, thatched with straw, and curiously primitive from every standpoint. Perhaps the farmer may just be descending by a ladder, carrying a three-pronged wooden pitch-

## *The Italian Lakes*

fork, while his young wife stands for a moment holding her baby in arms.

At another village a country festival may have beflagged the principal inn, called the country folk to put on their Sunday best, and is making them revolve on the terrace in the dance to the tune of a brass band. Perhaps another day you may surprise a military society out for an excursion and halting in some village square amid a concourse of boys and girls.

A transition full of delightful surprises marks the ascent of Monte Motterone. For awhile the nightingales sing in the chestnut-trees and the cuckoo calls, then come the larks, soaring and wheeling skyward above the open mountain meadows. The path has barely emerged from the shrubs of flowering rhododendron in the lakeside gardens, when our sweet friend, the wild rhododendron, or alpine rose, is detected in secluded spots fringing rugged cliffs. The daffodils cultivated along the lake terraces give place to the wild narcissus flung broadcast on the uplands, the stately tulip to the modest bell gentian. The beauties of lake and shore at first are seen to come and go through the forest branches, then are temporarily eclipsed



A COUNTRY FESTIVAL NEAR LAGO MAGGIORE



## *Monte Motterone*

as we mount, to reappear again as distant details when the summit is reached. To sum up, Monte Motterone is no ordinary climb, like those on the northern side of the Alps, with brambles and pines below and solitudes above, but belongs to the southern slope, and is distinctively of the Italian peninsula.

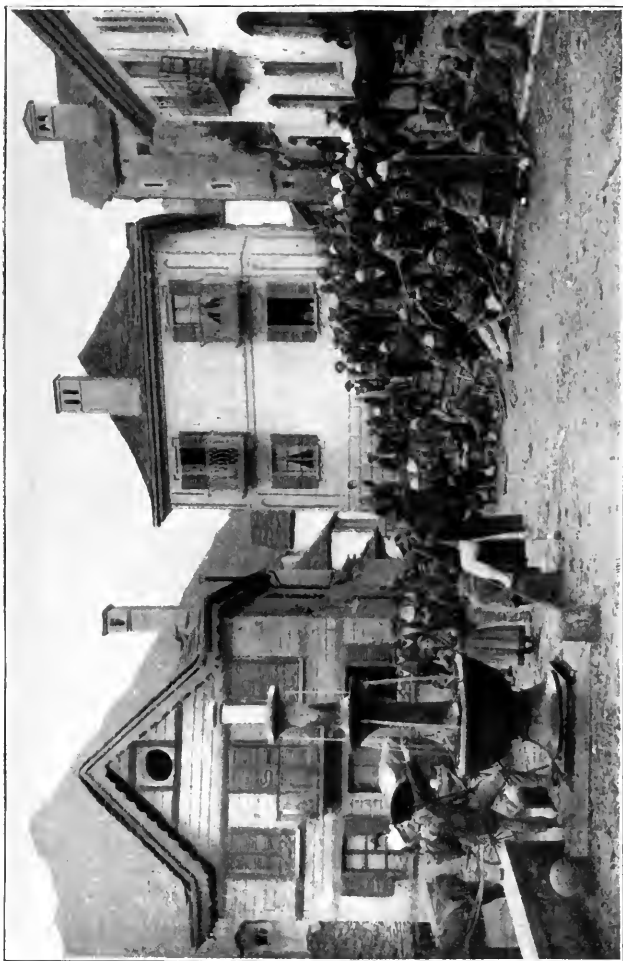
The view is justly famous. Although the summit is not quite five thousand feet above the level of the sea, yet from up there the assembly of the Alps seems nearly complete, and the absent ones can almost be supplied from memory. Starting with the Col di Tenda and Monte Viso in the far west, on the borders of France, and extending eastward as far as the Ortler and Adamello groups in the Austrian Crown Land Tyrol, the peaks stand in a semicircle of nearly two hundred miles, solemn and radiant, clad in imperishable purity, and acting as guardians, protectors, and benefactors of the sunny southern lake land at their feet. Monte Rosa, barely a dozen miles away, dominates the northern horizon, towering above them all, queen and centre of a great court of attendants. In fact, her sway is as undisputed in this region

## *The Italian Lakes*

as is that of Mont Blanc over the valley of Chamonix.

Among the better known peaks that glisten on the great white line are the Cima di Jazzi, Mischabel, Monte Leone, Jungfrau, and Fiescherhörner; the mountains of the Upper Rhine valley and the Engadine stand farther back, while closer at hand is seen Monte Generoso, acting as a friendly rival with Monte Motterone and Sasso del Ferro in the delightful profession of showing off the treasures of the alpine and subalpine world.

Down in the plain the sheen of silver windings denotes the rivers Ticino and Sesia, and in fair weather Milan is visible with its cathedral and arch of triumph, as well as Monza and Varese, Novara, and Vercelli, while the faint violet tracings of the Apennines close the southern view. In fairest weather, it is said, even Turin can be discovered amid the lowland haze off to the west. Seven lakes can be seen, large and small: Maggiore, Orta, Mergozzo, Varese, Biandronno, Monate, and Comabbio. The Borromean Islands seem to be swimming on Lake Maggiore like great pond-lilies of special pattern and imported from tropical climes, and the quaint isle of San Giulio



A HALT IN A VILLAGE SQUARE





## *Monte Motterone*

on Lake Orta looks as though it had been dropped from some mediæval sky.

The eye rests longest on our good friends, Baveno, Pallanza, and Intra, and strays northward to Luino, to the ruins on the islands of Cannero, to Maccagno, and the curve of the shore beyond. Over at Laveno the train is starting for Varese, to run through a country thickly strewn with habitations; tourist-laden steamboats are touching here and there at their landing-places, churning the blue water into white, sending up streamers of smoke, and trailing diverging lines in their wake. Picturesque St. Catherine and the crenelated castle of Angera attract attention. We find ourselves looking down from the atmosphere of the Alps into a populous plain, dotted not only with gardens and villas but also with factories, storehouses, and other evidences of industrial and commercial Italy,—showing that even in this lake land of surpassing beauty work has to be done and all is not play all the time.

Should the weather prove variable on Monte Motterone, still the clouds will bring beauties and compensations of their own. Perhaps they will drift superbly in great rolling masses about Monte Rosa, or rise

## *The Italian Lakes*

like smoke from the quarried precipices of Montorfano. Possibly they may close in altogether on us, for awhile at least, and spread a gentle stillness over the pastures of Monte Motterone. At such times it is well to look for sudden openings of startling beauty, pictures of a gigantic *camera obscura*. A rift in the clouds may reveal momentarily one of the Borromean Islands far below, the palace on Isola Bella, or the campanile on Isola dei Pescatori, illuminated by a strong ray of yellow light and surrounded by water of vivid azure; or a mountainside may gleam for an instant in bright vernal green. Before the clouds blot out the scene again, rowboats may appear on the lake like tiny insects threading their way across, a patch of water may glisten silver sweet, or a strip of the gay lakeside may show itself, bathed in an intense blue-black atmosphere. These contrasting glimpses, from an alpine world into the lap of luxury and the pride of civilization, constitute a unique charm of the good mountain.

Both from a geological and botanical aspect, Monte Motterone has its special merits. It stood for ages like a great granite rampart against the glaciers advancing down the

## *Monte Motterone*

valleys where the Toce and Ticino Rivers now run. Its lower flanks have been sprinkled with erratic blocks brought down from the distant heights upon the backs of these glaciers. The blocks are especially noticeable in the neighbourhood of the village of Gignese.

To-day Monte Motterone forms a veritable park of vast pastures, kept as fresh as lawns by an effective system of irrigation. Little channels cross the slopes in long trenches slightly off the line of the horizontal, bringing the water of the mountain brooks to freshen the grazing lands. The result is that to match such a succession of green *alps*, it would be necessary to travel to the famous Seiser Alp above the Gröden Valley in Tyrol, or to the Pinzgauer Promenade on the borders of Salzburg, or even to the uplands of the Sette Comuni, south of the Valsugana. There are about a hundred of these *alps* on Monte Motterone, feeding some two thousand cows and many sheep. Ten of the *alps*, with their rude huts and groups of trees, belong to the family of the Counts of Borromeo. No greater difference in possession can be imagined than exists between these high-placed properties

## *The Italian Lakes*

and the better known Borromean Islands below. Their one bond of sympathy seems to lie in their island nature, the former being veritable oases upon the rolling green, the latter bright spots upon the great blue basin of the lake. The family also possesses a little villa at the village of Levo which is passed on the way up from Baveno or Stresa.

The summit of Monte Motterone has been visited by a number of royalties, notably in 1885 by the then Queen Margherita of Italy, well known as a genial and happy enthusiast in alpine matters. In all respects the visit is to be urged upon those who can make time for it on their Italian lakes journey. In a few moments the wealth of a great part of this region in variety, freshness, colour, and form can be quickly grasped and the details studied for a nearer acquaintance. To the Italians of the near-by cities Monte Motterone is a welcome refuge in the hour of persistent heat. All summer long there is the tinkling of cow-bells from the irrigated slopes, the birds soar, and the bees buzz about their business. In their seasons the flowers come, nod to the breezes, and then go, and the morning mist floats off into thin streamers to caress the slopes with kindly fingers.

## CHAPTER IX

### RIVIERA AND LAGO D'ORTA

AMONG the many merits of the Simplon tunnel is also this, that it is reviving the interest of the travelling public in an idyllic bit of lake country, intensely Italian in character, — the Riviera and Lago d'Orta. The railroad from Domo d'Ossola, going southward to Novara, runs along the eastern shore of Lake Orta and high above this unique mountain lake, which lies pensive sweet below in a deep basin whose sides are formed by steep cliffs and abrupt slopes, rising in an amphitheatre of mutual admiration, and culminating in great swelling mountain forms clad with forests. By virtue of the attraction of the Simplon tunnel it may happen that the traveller who suddenly catches a glimpse of this unique fairy lake may have landed but the day before in the seaport of Genoa from a transatlantic voyage, or coming from the

## *The Italian Lakes*

north may have spent the preceding morning amid the glaciers of Switzerland.

East and west, delightful passes also give access to Lago d'Orta, one from Lago Maggiore over Monte Motterone, and another from Varallo in the Val Sesia over the Colle di Colma. There are also carriage roads from Arona by way of Gozzano, or from Gravellona to Omegna, and mule paths connect the nestling villages among the forests of chestnut-trees.

Little Lago d'Orta, thus set among the heights, is in striking contrast to Lago Maggiore, with its grand expanses and magnificent distances.

Sir John Lubbock, in "The Scenery of Switzerland," points out that Lago d'Orta, contrary to the other Italian lakes, has its outflow to the north, not to the south, the southern end being blocked by a *moraine*, *i. e.* an accumulation of mountain refuse, brought down by a glacier which has long since disappeared. The lake waters issue at Omegna in a little stream called the Nigolia, this empties into the Strona, the latter into the Toce, and finally the united waters fall together into Lago Maggiore, — and all this within a finger's breadth on the map.

## *Riviera and Lago d'Orta*

The lake of Orta is some nine miles long, and the prevalent breezes are from southeast or northeast in the morning, and from the west in the evening. It is reputed to be very well stocked with fish.

Since the railroad, running north and south, will surely whistle, rumble, and speak for itself, let our description of an approach to the lake be of that silent upland path over Monte Motterone. In due order the Colle di Colma will also be considered.

Let us suppose that the traveller has walked up the mountain from Baveno or Stresa on Lago Maggiore, has rested at the hotel on Monte Motterone, and is now prepared to descend the western slope of this famous mountain to Lago d'Orta. If the start from the top be made in the morning, the alpine pastures of the summit, stretching in great billows to all points of the compass, will be vocal with jubilant larks; and, if it is June, the grass will be joyously perfumed with many thousand flowers of the poetical narcissus. Moreover, if the day be clear, Monte Rosa will loom up from among the Alps with tremendous power and immanence. A cart track with an easy grade marks the way down to the rim of the timber line of

## *The Italian Lakes*

chestnut-trees, which is the limit to which the villages in this region find it profitable to grow. As high as this line they still cluster in the hollows or perch on projections. Perhaps you, too, may meet the ox-cart with the patient beasts that carries provisions to the hotel.

The descent into the valley, where the town of Orta lies so snug and secure on the pleasant lake-shore, means added human interest with every foot of decreasing altitude. It is a change from the sweetly solitary grasslands above to the cultivated Italian countryside below with its terraced vineyards, its patches of velvet on the slope, its crowded white hamlets, and semitropical villa gardens. More especially does the descent afford superb views of the lake and its lofty granite cliffs.

Passing Armeno and Miasino, then under the railroad bridge, leaving to one side the Villa Crespi, — in Moorish style with a tall tower and gilded dome, — we curve down to the water's edge by a road lined with delightful villas, perched on rocky ground and brilliant with trailing honeysuckle and rock plants of strange forms and colours. The villa of Marquis Natta lies at the southern



## *Riviera and Lago d'Orta*

entrance of the town proper, then suddenly we find ourselves within Orta itself. At the time of the author's visit three signs met the traveller at the entrance, one prohibiting begging, another the trotting or galloping of horses, and a third the riding of bicycles "and such like" (*e simili*). What Orta has to say of automobiles to-day is not yet known to the author. There is a miniature square opening upon the lake, some exceedingly narrow streets paved with stone slabs, Italian fashion, a wonder island out there upon the lake, and a wooded hill at the back laid out as a park. That is about all there is to Orta, but it is enough to make of it a tiny epitome of Italian history, art, and scenery, which will repay more than a passing glance from the railroad train.

The square is also the market-place. It is picturesquely shaded by trees and has some diminutive porticoes. At one side stands an interesting *municipio*, or town hall, raised on columns like stilts. If the day be Wednesday, the square will be alive with the weekly fair. There is the loud clamour of bargaining in the neighbouring inns and under the canvas covers of the stalls. In fact, canvas is much in evidence, for in this country every

## *The Italian Lakes*

rustic conveyance on land and water, from donkey-cart to rowboat, goes under canvas, for the sake both of sun and rain. Under the arches of the *municipio* a mountebank is giving an entertainment and earning frantic applause from the country people, who are quick to appreciate his every look and gesture. Many of these good people have come long distances, and betray in their clothes a tendency toward many varieties of costume.

Later on, when the traveller has crossed the lake, climbed the Colma, and entered into the sequestered region of Varallo and beyond, there will be many more costumes to cause wonder. Even if it were only for the enormous rich red or dark blue umbrellas, which the visitors to the fair of Orta carry along highway and lake-shore, there would be cause for gratitude, since the very umbrellas cast further notes of colour upon the fair Italian landscape. Then there are always the donkeys to cause admiration, sometimes harnessed with horses of hardly greater stature than themselves, sometimes driven tandem fashion before long funnel-shaped carts on two wheels, the latter covered, of course, with canvas. It would seem that all

## *Riviera and Lago d'Orta*

the spare change we may have about our persons, in the way of good-will and loving-kindness, might well be spent upon the meek and patient little donkeys of Italy, that give so much and ask so little in return.

On the market-place by the lake stands the Hotel San Giulio, an hostelry of such quaint interest that it deserves description, even in a book which does not recommend particular hotels to tourists. Hotel San Giulio has an interior court decorated with plants. Every aspect of the house is old-world and old-fashioned, and possibly even a little out of line, like an object of art made by hand and not manufactured by machinery. The two little galleries and the doors on their antique hinges give evidence of the good old times. They have the appearance of being home-made.

In the days before the usefulness of the Simplon carriage road had begun to wane, and its popularity had been largely superseded by that of the St. Gothard railroad, and long before the Simplon tunnel had been thought of, Orta saw much through traffic between Italy and the countries to the north, and much coming and going of notabilities, in public or private coaches, bound on im-

## *The Italian Lakes*

portant diplomatic and military errands, or on pleasure bent. Many of these travellers seem to have stayed at the San Giulio, and very obligingly wrote their names in the strangers' book of the hotel, thus making a truly extraordinary collection of autographs. Beginning with 1851, this book proceeds to enumerate a list of royalties and of other persons distinguished for one reason or another.

The then King and Queen of Saxony head the list. There follow the names of many English lords and ladies. In bewildering array and without order of precedence, the reader's eyes fall upon the signatures of a Prince and Princess of Savoy, of Cavour, of several English generals, the Duchess of Genoa, German countesses, Prince and Princess de Joinville, Baron Charles de Rothschild, English bishops and deans, Prince Jerome Napoleon, Russians, Belgians, le Duc d'Aumale, Louis Kossuth (twice), Professor Ruskin of Oxford, the Queen of England (from Baveno, in 1879), the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Prince and Princess of Prussia (Oct. 12, 1883), Baker Pasha, the Count of Flanders, and Queen Margherita of Italy (from Stresa, Sept. 26, 1891).

## *Riviera and Lago d'Orta*

And now to the island of San Giulio, which lies off the promontory of Orta, like a gem of special price pendent from a jewelled necklace!

You may have seen this island from the railroad, from the slopes in your descent upon Orta, or from the water-front of the market-place, but it should be seen also at closer quarters and examined from the vantage-point of the water itself. At the time of the author's visit, there were half a dozen boatmen, organized as a sort of a benevolent society under the presidency of a fine-looking patriarch with a white beard. It was reported that these men had an arrangement by which their total earnings were pooled at the end of the week and a dividend declared after the fashion of real live syndicates. This arrangement at least prevented the usual skirmishes for employment among the men, and to that extent heightened the pleasure of the trip across to the island.

Orta itself is not very modern in appearance and in appurtenances, but compared with the island of San Giulio, it is absolutely recent. The row over to the island takes us back not merely through the whole of modern and mediæval history, but actu-

## *The Italian Lakes*

ally deposits us on the very edge of ancient history, in the period when Constantine, the Great, was ruler of the Roman Empire and had his capital at Byzantium, renamed Constantinople after himself.

Tradition relates that during his reign two brothers, Julius and Julianus, were born of Christian parents on the Grecian island of Ægina, and that later in life, after many vicissitudes, they reached the shores of Lago d'Orta as Christian missionaries. Before settling there they seem to have suffered from the persecutions of the Emperor Valens, a partisan of Arianism, but to have received official authorization from Emperor Theodosius to carry on their missionary labours in outlying portions of the empire. They are reputed to have begun their work together at Gozzano, near the southern end of the lake; then Julius, leaving his brother, is said to have established himself on the island now known as that of San Giulio.

It must have seemed a far cry from the classic island in the Ægean Sea to this rocky islet under the shadow of the Alps.

As the boat touches the steps of the island landing, and the visitor mounts from the water's edge into the interior of an ancient

## *Riviera and Lago d'Orta*

little basilica, he is reminded of the early centuries of Christian architecture. There have been many changes and restorations, but the general plan of this church recalls on a small scale the Church of S. Ambrose in Milan, the women's gallery, or *matroneum*, points back to St. Sophia in Constantinople, and the primitive pulpit reliefs suggest certain ornaments of St. Mark's in Venice. A sarcophagus of white marble has been furnished with a lid and is used as an alms-box. The style of the leaf pattern of the sarcophagus shows that it dates from the Roman period of the Antonines, but the lettering, "Meinul," probably refers to one Meinulf, Duke of the Island of San Giulio, who was stationed here by the Longobardic Prince Agilulf.

The principal feature of the Byzantine interior of the church is the archaic pulpit of serpentine marble, once green, now black with age, the stone having been cut from the neighbouring quarries of Oira. The reliefs on this pulpit represent the symbols of the four evangelists. There is also the figure of a man, possibly St. Paul, standing with a sword, and a number of fabulous and mystical animals are carved upon this pulpit,

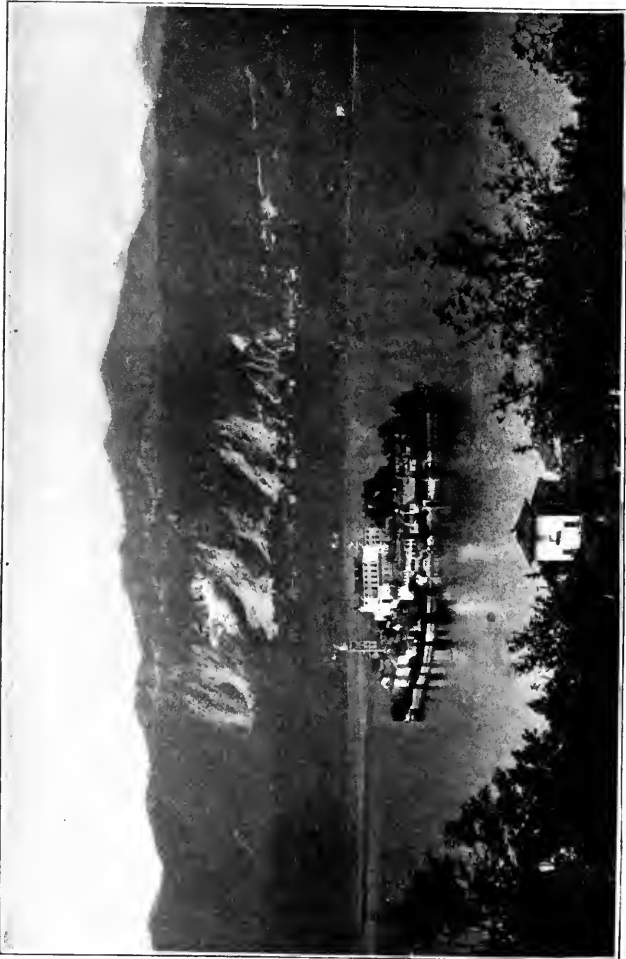
## *The Italian Lakes*

similar to those seen at Gravedona on Lake Como. The pulpit stands upon four dissimilar columns, now somewhat mutilated. In the church a parchment is shown of Otto the Great, dated 962, and granting the canons of the basilica of San Giulio certain lands in return for services rendered against the Longobardic king, Berengar II., this taking place in the very year in which Otto renewed the imperial office in Rome and instituted the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation.

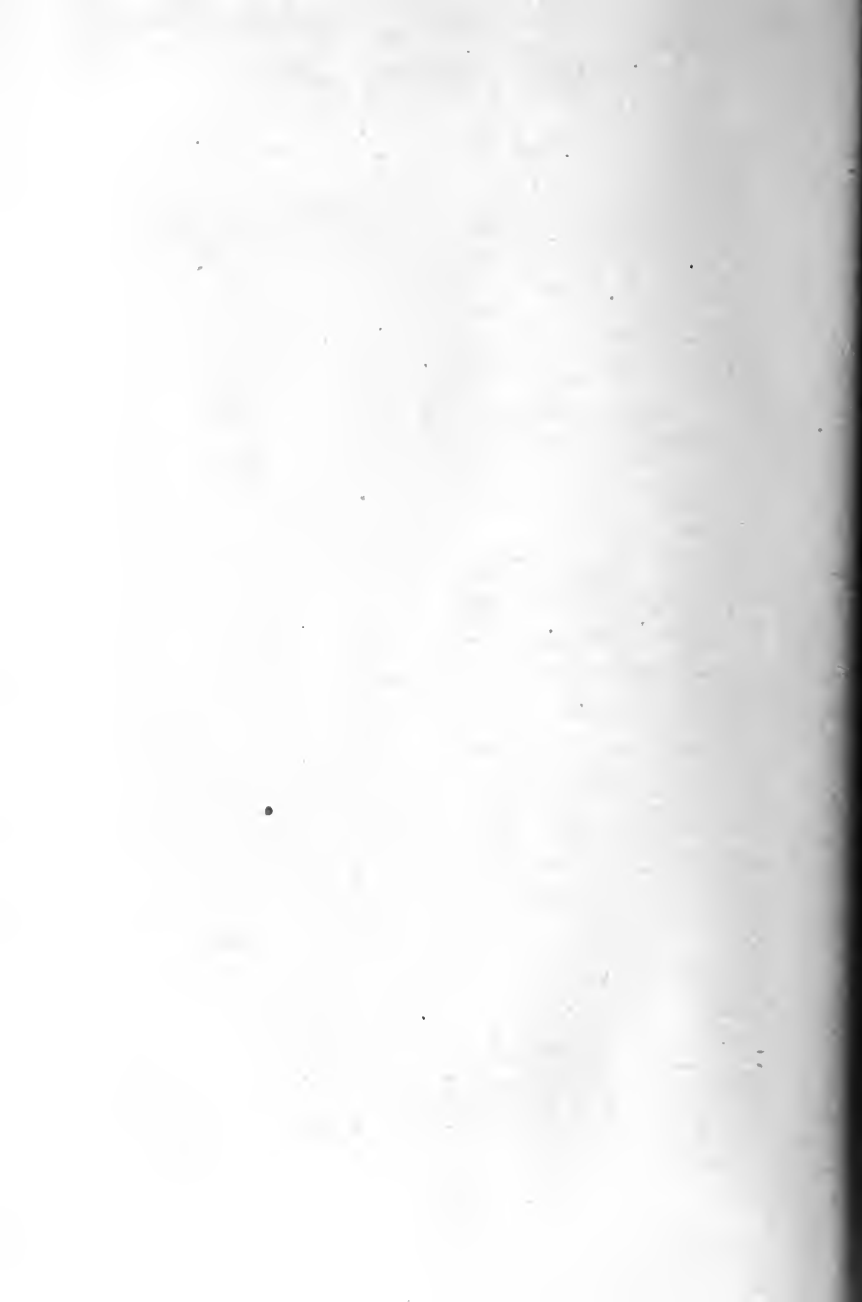
The church also contains a Madonna ascribed to Gaudenzio Ferrari, and other paintings said to be by Guido Reni, Carlo Dolce, and Sasso Ferato. On the pillars local chroniclers have scratched bits of news, for the most part in strange Latin and setting forth the remarkable characteristics of the passing years, *e. g.* in 1523 there was much rain and cold, in 1588 there was no snow at all, in 1666 an extraordinary abundance of harvest, etc.

When the church has been visited, the tour of the island should be made by boat. It will not take long, for the island is a tiny affair, not more than three hundred yards in length and 160 in width. The houses,





ISLAND OF SAN GIULIO, LAGO D'ORTA



## *Riviera and Lago d'Orta*

crowded together in a picturesque aggregation, rise from the very edge of the quiet water in which their every detail is clearly mirrored. The campanile of the church, the seminary on the highest part, and below the dwellings and small villas, decorated with characteristic Italian *loggie*, terraces, and balconies, especially the graceful archways for boats,—all are faithfully duplicated in the water. The Italian love of house-tinting has found free play on the island of San Giulio, and produced results in the combinations of tones which win the admiration of visiting artists. Here a pale green house crowds against a pink one, then comes one in yellow, and even pale blue is not excluded; only the prosaic whitewash of common use seems to be barred from the colour-scheme of the island of San Giulio. None of the precious space is wasted; where stone and mortar are not in possession, gardens bloom and creeping plants fill the very interstices of this island conglomeration.

As the boat heads once more for Orta, the water-front of that town is seen to be pierced all along the line by the distinctive Italian archways for boats. Flowering balconies and tiny gardens make Orta brilliant, tur-

## *The Italian Lakes*

reted villas dot the hillside at the back, and the railroad, up above, adds to the beauty of the whole by the handsome arches of its bridge and its truly superb manner of construction.

There remains for our inspection the Monte d'Orta, or *sacro monte*, just behind the town, intervening between the town proper and the railroad and occupying what might be termed the back of the promontory of Orta.

The *monte* is a finely wooded hill laid out as a park, on which twenty chapels have been set among the trees to illustrate the life of St. Francis of Assisi. There are bright laurel hedges and convenient benches for the visitor along the shady paths. Here are oaks and pines, and in their midst carpets of green lawns gleam with the sheen of velvet pile. Here and there through the branching trees glimpses are caught up and down the lake, as it sparkles under the action of wind and sun, or lies placid in the shelter of some projecting mountain. The bare solitary tower of Buccione rises in the south; opposite Orta, the church at Boletto is perched above sheer quarries of black gran-

## *Riviera and Lago d'Orta*

ite; from a tower on the summit of the hill even Monte Rosa is said to be visible.

Amid the tranquillity of the park voices come up from the market-place below, a cart rumbles on the highway, a cock crows in a village barn-yard, or a church-bell rings. The tiled roofs of the town, green, red, and brown, stretch themselves in many lines toward the lake and make for rest and shelter.

## CHAPTER X

OVER THE COLMA TO VARALLO: CHESTNUT  
FORESTS, VARALLO, GAUDENZIO FERRARI,  
SACRO MONTE, FOBELLO AND BEYOND

### *Chestnut Forests*

FOLD on fold the chestnut forests mount from Lake Orta to the Colle di Colma. Fold on fold they descend on the other side, in rich rounded waves of foliage, and stretch for miles in a sea of exquisite colour down into the Val Sesia. A great part of the way over the pass is brightened for the traveller in the month of June by the glisten of their satin leaves, the yellow tassels of their blossoms, or the vivid green of their countless burrs. This is decidedly the chestnut belt in which the visitor to the southern foot of the Alps finds himself. Farther south are the vineyards in the foot-hills, then come the irrigated fields of rice in the plains, but here the chestnut reigns supreme, a staple product, a crop constituting a veritable agricultural

## *Chestnut Forests*

and commercial department of its own in fruitful Italy.

In the silent dawn one of the fraternity of boatmen rows you across Lake Orta to the white houses of Pella, where the path starts for the pass. The lake lies calm and unruffled in its titanic cup, the storied island of San Giulio rests upon the water like a floating swan asleep. Pella itself, though tiny of dimension, is full of importance by reason of a paper-mill, and, as you start to climb through the trees, a bell presently tinkles in the solitude, giving the impression that some alpine cow with her bell has wandered down to the lowlands. But on nearer approach it is discovered that there is a busy brook amid the opulent verdure, which turns a rude wheel, which again rings a bell, which is to announce the presence of a little inn with a thatched roof. Indeed the thatched cottage is characteristic of the slopes of the Colle di Colma, especially on the side of the Val Sesia, where many neat barns, built partly of stone and mortar and partly of wood, are heavily weighted with picturesque straw hoods.

The path wanders very much at haphazard through the forest. Here charcoal-burners

## *The Italian Lakes*

are detected at work; there, in a clearing, a little flock of tall, long-legged Bergamesque sheep nibble peacefully; white, bell-like flowers punctuate the shaded stretches of velvet turf; the brook murmurs an accompaniment to our footsteps; and all day long the cuckoo calls from branch to branch, far and near, over the great chestnut belt. It is worth a long trip to reach these unique woodland experiences among the chestnuts and walnuts of Italy.

But sylvan solitude is not for long on these thickly settled slopes; the prospect opens; through the branches glimpses are caught of villages clinging to the mountains; the path is bordered by cultivated patches, and presently it widens into a road, and the road becomes a cobbled street. We are passing through a village built on a small scale. A sudden corner brings us into the diminutive square; a gaudily dressed woman is seen leaning out of the window of a house opposite the church, at another window a man appears in the act of playing the flute to a song-bird in a cage. There is something startling about the appearance of these people, and we stop to watch them, — but they do not move. The woman silently watches



## *Varallo*

the street, the man holds the flute to his lips immovably. Moreover, there is no sound. What, is it possible? We step nearer. Yes, the figures are *painted*. The instinct which induces the Italian to paint artificial windows upon his house walls, or superb vases at the corners of his best balcony, has found expression also in this secluded mountain village.

And then we swing downward, with long strides, over a fine, new road into a region that is not strictly of the Italian lakes, but is so near of kin that it shall find mention in this book, the Val Sesia, with Varallo as its capital.

## *Varallo*

At the confluence of the rapid rushing torrents of the Sesia and the Mastallone, and at the end of the railroad from Novara, lies one of the most picturesquely placed towns of Italy.

The first sight of Varallo, as the traveller reaches it from the trip over the Colma, is in its way as memorable as the view of some of Italy's great hill towns, Siena, Orvieto, or Perugia. It is sights such as these which explain the landscape backgrounds of some

## *The Italian Lakes*

of the old masters and the classical subjects of more modern painters, — backgrounds and subjects which often look so strangely artificial and imaginary to northern eyes. But at Varallo, in this subalpine world, with the lower mountain slopes clothed in a practically continuous forest of chestnut-trees, — just as north of the Alps the slopes are pine clad, — all the ingredients are at hand for pictures fit to tax the most willing credulity and power of perception. This cuckoo-haunted region of sylvan affluence and abundance forms a fitting link between the ancient cities of the plain and the immemorial Alps.

A little old town clusters and climbs about the foot of a great rock which looks like a lofty citadel with crown and diadem. The cliff towers above this Italian town and dominates it as truly as ever an acropolis overhung a town of ancient Greece. But instead of fortress masonry and classic temples, the Sacro Monte of Varallo presents the picture of peaceful walls, loggias, and domes belonging to church and chapel.

We enter the city by a long suburban avenue, new, bare, and glaring. Then comes the railroad station and a piazza with statue of Victor Emmanuel II. These modern evi-

## *Gaudenzio Ferrari*

dences once left behind, we plunge into streets characteristic of the past. Here are the arcades once more, the stairways, balconies, and interior courts; here we are impressed again with the curious waywardness, the diminutiveness, and the unexpectedness of things Italian. There is a powerful bridge over the Mastallone, and near it a statue of General Giacomo Antonini. But Varallo is also bestirring itself to keep pace with the demands of the present. Hence there is an Alpine club with reading-room, to which visitors are admitted, a huge hydropathic establishment, a big cotton-mill, and the blare of trumpets resounds through the streets to the quick march of battalions of gay *Alpini*, or alpine troops. Varallo also possesses a natural history collection, in conjunction with a small picture-gallery, and this turns thought to the painter who has given the town one of its claims upon world-wide attention, — Gaudenzio Ferrari.

*Gaudenzio Ferrari (1484 - 1549, or 1471 - 1546)*

There is a quiet little square in Varallo, grass-grown and almost pathetic in its aloof-

## *The Italian Lakes*

ness, which goes by the name of Piazza Ferrari. Here, surrounded by a ring of little houses crowded one against the other, with peaked mountain forms for a background, stands the marble statue of Gaudenzio Ferrari by Vedova. The painter is represented somewhat conventionally with an open scroll in one hand, and the other extended as though in the act of explaining or illustrating some thesis. He wears the cap, tunic, and hose and the flowing robe of his day and fashion. Some symbolical medallions and an inscription decorate the pedestal, and an iron railing throws a protecting octagon around the whole. Thus the painter stands amid the silence of the mountains.

Gaudenzio Ferrari belonged to the Milanese or Piedmontese school, but he went further afield and studied in Florence and Rome. He was a contemporary of Raphael, a prolific painter of sacred subjects, an artist of distinct power, who probably reached the climax of his achievements in the work which he did in the pilgrimage church of Saronno. Some of his best painting is also to be found in the cathedral of Como, in Turin, and in the Brera Gallery of Milan, but next to Saronno, Varallo is decidedly

## *Sacro Monte*

the place to study Gaudenzio Ferrari at his best.

There he has left specimens of his work in the old collegiate church of San Gaudenzio, in Santa Maria di Loreto, and in the chapels of the Sacro Monte. In the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, a small edifice of insignificant appearance, Ferrari painted a Passion in twenty-one scenes on the rood screen, with the Crucifixion as the central and largest fresco. These frescoes look exceedingly well preserved. A striking feature of his work is that in some cases details have been worked out in actual relief from the wall, in order to heighten the effect of the perspective; thus in the fresco of the Crucifixion, a leg of the centurion on horseback is modelled as well as painted. This species of art prepares the traveller for the remarkable combination of the plastic arts with the art of painting, which is characteristic of the terra-cotta groups in the chapels of the Sacro Monte higher up.

## *Sacro Monte*

From Santa Maria delle Grazie a broad pathway shaded by chestnut-trees leads up-

## *The Italian Lakes*

ward to the summit of the great cliff. It is a steep inclined plane; the cobbles have been carefully laid, and many feet through many years have worn a smooth and hard road-bed. Up there is the "New Jerusalem," consisting of a large church with a marble façade, mosaics, and bronze doors, and of no less than forty-six chapels or oratories set apparently at every angle and representing a great variety in architecture and site. Interspersed among the chapels are shade-trees, shrubberies, and beds of flowers. The chapels, which are not made to be entered, contain portrayals of Scriptural scenes by means of life-size figures in terra-cotta, dating mostly from the sixteenth century. The Sacro Monte of Varallo was founded by a monk, Bernardino Caimo, on his return from a visit to the Holy Land toward the end of the fifteenth century, at about the time that Columbus discovered America. Most of the chapels, however, date from a later period, after Carlo Borromeo had paid two visits to the place in the sixteenth century, and given the whole the name of the "New Jerusalem."

It is not easy to judge fairly of the type of art to be found in the chapels, while cling-

## *Sacro Monte*

ing closely to the standards set by modern taste. The attempt has been made in them to combine sculpture and painting, and this has been done in a manner generally both crude and vivid. Terra-cotta, wood, frescoed backgrounds, and bas-reliefs have all been used in the desire to produce realistic effects. Thus the heads are covered with real hair, and the figures with actual clothes of linen and cloth. As the visitor passes along the series of numbered chapels from one oratory to another, and looks through the gratings or peep-holes, it is easier for him to appreciate the intention of the artists than to commend their methods or results. The evident intent is to enact picture plays in pantomime, to produce passion or miracle plays, or a species of tableaux in perpetuity, with the action of a great number of persons suddenly arrested. In addition to whatever interest these scenes may arouse from an artistic standpoint, it is clear that they throw some light upon the habits and customs of the sixteenth century, for the artists reproduced the fashions of their own day, and were not above perpetrating anachronisms.

The best groups are by Tabacchetti and Stella. Tabacchetti's real name was De

## *The Italian Lakes*

Wespin, being of Flemish origin. The Crucifixion attributed to Gaudenzio Ferrari himself, or to an artist working from his designs, is perhaps the principal work of all. The materials used are combined with great skill, occasionally there is much beauty of modelling, as in "The Nativity," showing Mary and Joseph stooping over the child Jesus. Here face and hands are full of unusual beauty and refinement. The "Flight into Egypt" serves as an excellent illustration of the combination of different materials used, for the donkey supporting the figures of Mary and Jesus is of wood, a real rope passes from its mouth to the hand of an angel, which, however, is painted upon the frescoed background. In "The Last Supper" the table is heaped with viands and fruits of many kinds, the walls of the apartment are handsomely decorated, and an open door shows servitors in waiting. In "The Entry into Jerusalem" a figure, probably that of Zacchæus, is seen in the sycamore-tree. The scene representing the "Ecce Homo" is depicted in a palace court of profuse richness of decoration. The figure of Jesus appears on a marble balcony, surrounded by his persecutors. Below a great variety of persons



## *Sacro Monte*

are watching his torments with gesture and mien expressive of their particular sentiments toward him. "The Crucifixion" is a work of power and tragic gloom intensified by the portrayal of the crowd's pitiless curiosity and the greed of the soldiers in casting lots for Jesus' garments.

Yet, when all is said and done, the true significance of these historic scenes cannot be materialized, but must be spiritually apprehended. Hence when every artistic merit which it is possible to see in these chapel scenes has been acknowledged, there is no doubt that the visitor turns from them with relief to the glad sunshine of all outdoors.

The view from the chief point of vantage on the Sacro Monte stretches southward over the Val Sesia, bathed in genial light, and northward up the narrowing valleys to the great mountains beyond. From the town below sounds of homely activity rise to warm our hearts again, and even the whistling and clanging of trains at the railroad station come as a welcome change. As we pass out of the "New Jerusalem," there is a cheery, voluble game of bowls going on under the spreading trees over by the restaurant and café. It may not be amiss for us to sit on

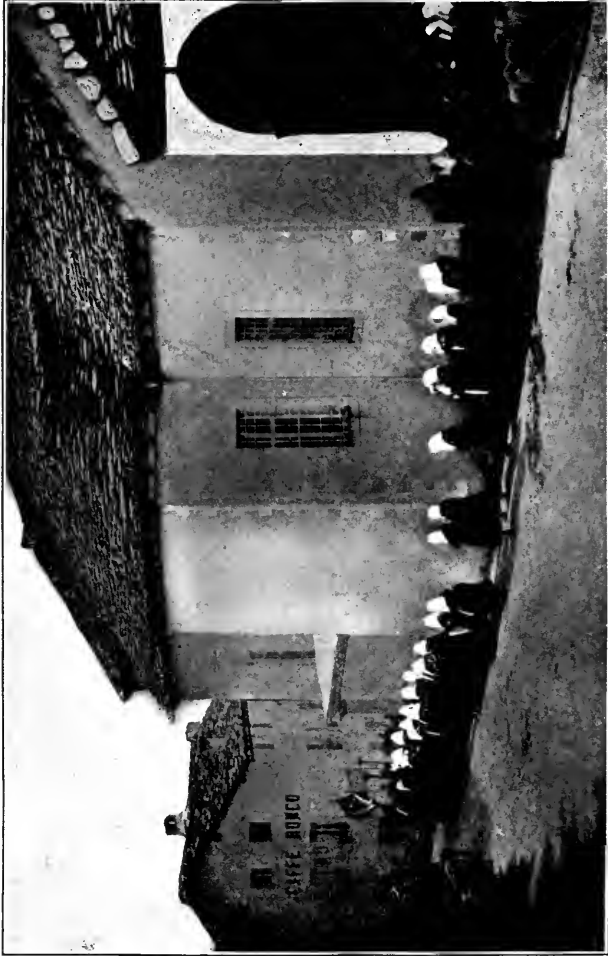
## *The Italian Lakes*

the grass and watch the merry group for awhile, before descending to the workaday world once more. In the meantime peasant women, in the distinctive costumes with which the region to the north is so rich, come and go up and down the great inclined plane of the cobbled pathway.

### *Fobello and Beyond*

Northward from Varallo lies a region of surpassing interest and beauty, which has not yet attracted the attention of many regular tourists, but is known principally to Italian visitors and to alpine climbers intent upon Swiss passes and the high peaks of the Zermatt and Saas valley districts. It is a region of spreading valleys that seem to have but one dominant thought, one inspiration and aspiration, namely, Monte Rosa, undisputed in her rule and benefactions. Viewed from this southern aspect, the snow peaks appear to start up out of the very forests of chestnut at their bases into a sky of Italian limpidity and softness.

The omnibus will take you from Varallo, up the Val Sesia, to Alagna, a large village admirably placed for excursions in the



THE BLESSING OF THE SHEEP AT ALAGNA



## *Fobello and Beyond*

Monte Rosa group. It is a centre for experts among the climbing fraternity and also for Italian summer guests. Visitors there sometimes catch a glimpse of the picturesque ceremonial of the blessing of the sheep. In another direction, up the Val Mastallone, it is possible to drive to Fobello, and thence to walk over the Colle di Baranca into the Val Anzasca, and thus by carriage road up to Macugnaga, at the foot of Monte Rosa. Or, diverging from the Val Mastallone before reaching Fobello, a road will be found ascending the Landwasser from the Ponte delle Due Acque and leading to Rimella, a hamlet of German-speaking peasants.

This community and other similar German-speaking ones on the southern side of Monte Rosa were planted by immigrants from the Upper Valais in Switzerland. This fact was first pointed out by De Saussure, as long ago as 1789, and has since been confirmed by a careful examination and comparison of dialects and customs. In other quarters the opinion has been advanced that these peasants were perhaps Teutonic refugees from the plain of Lombardy, but this theory has not been sustained. The similarity of the dialects in the Upper Valais

## *The Italian Lakes*

with those in the German communities on the southern side of the Alps refutes such a supposition. Especially is there a striking resemblance among words dealing with domestic utensils and with pastoral life in the heights. Besides Rimella, there are traces of German at Alagna, Gressoney, Rima, and Macugnaga.

But, whichever way one turns in these valleys north of Varallo, the discovery is quickly made that this district is one of the very last refuges of the peasant costume, as a regular daily institution. Nowhere else in the western Alps, to my knowledge, have distinctive peasant costumes survived in more profusion, at least among the women. Every valley seems to display a difference in cut, texture, or colour.

Especially do the women of Fobello distinguish themselves from the rest on this account. They wear curious cloth leggings and short petticoats, and at first sight, except for their white skins, they look not unlike American Indians, veritable squaws of the mountains. These leggings, *calzone*, or more properly trouser legs, are richly worked; the linen bodice, too, has insertions of embroidery, and there is always an

## *Fobello and Beyond*

apron, which is generally folded up in front so as to serve as a handy pocket. As for the men of this same region at the southern foot of Monte Rosa, they have entirely discarded peasant costumes, if they ever had any. The reason is not far to seek. They emigrate annually to France, Switzerland, or Germany to find work, leaving the women at home to perform the field and woodland labour and keep up the local traditions. This constant contact with the great world outside has long since made peasant costumes inconvenient and undesirable for the men of this region. It is reported that Fobello sends many men cooks into foreign parts.

The drive from Varallo to Fobello is full of novelty, partly by reason of the women's costumes, varying with every valley that opens to right or left, and partly on account of the extraordinary scenery. The Val Mastallone itself is a narrow defile of savage and sombre mien; the water flows glass-green in the river-bed, where an occasional fisherman may be seen at a pool on trout intent. The picturesque Ponte della Gula and the Ponte delle Due Acque, already mentioned, are landmarks.

As the *posta*, or post-chaise, progresses,

## *The Italian Lakes*

we pass women carrying enormous loads of brushwood on their backs or heads. Their costume is dark blue, kerchiefs of the same colour are tied over their heads. Other women are met wearing footless stockings, which leave the feet bare. Some wear white sleeves and chemisettes, others show bright green or red trimmings. Farther on, the dark blue dress receives a wide scarlet border, and the women, working on their tiny terraced patches or watching the goats on the slopes, look like vivid red blotches against the green. Thick-soled slippers of felt make their appearance, big gold earrings shine under the dark hair, and the dresses are fastened by ornate yokes over the shoulders. It would take an expert to do justice to all the shifting changes of costume in a day's journey through this land under the shadow of Monte Rosa.

From Fobello a good path leads over the Colle di Baranca to Pontegrande, or over the Colle d'Egua to Carcoforo.

The Italian passes are not yet as carefully marked as those of Switzerland or Tyrol, and in case of bad weather, or out of season, there may be need of some way-showing, even for an expert. Sometimes the clouds



## *Fobello and Beyond*

descend suddenly; in thick weather the path is easily lost as it reaches the pastures or rocky stretches. Yet, if the sense of fear is not indulged, there is a mighty joy in the interplay of contending forces. Perhaps, as the mists part, there is a momentary glimpse of a pole standing in the snow upon some mountain saddle; that is enough for the time being as an indication of the way, and presently the greatly desired *other side* is viewed at last. Far below lie the huts of a welcome *alp*, spelling refuge and safety.

Since, throughout this region, the able-bodied men spend only about two months of the year at home, a few innkeepers, a shoemaker or two, some masons making repairs, some men working on the roads, and a few little boys tending the goats are about the only representative males in evidence. It would then seem just to the good women of these valleys to feel some special gratitude to them for the well-tended pastures on the slopes, the neat hamlets on terraces, and the general picturesqueness they impart. Necessity has peopled these alpine valleys; no mere enthusiasm for mountain scenery has drawn this population to its laborious, unremitting, and largely cheerless tasks. No one

## *The Italian Lakes*

can pass through these valleys and view the conditions of earthly existence there without wishing mankind every just and honourable relief from such burdens, and a greater participation in the comforts and pleasures of life.

At this point, our excursion, away from the lakes into the forest recesses and under the vaulting branches of the chestnut belt, must cease and the return must be made, in accordance with a strict pursuance of the subject indicated by the title of this book.

## CHAPTER XI

### LAKE LUGANO

AFTER the broad and expansive beauties of Lakes Maggiore and Como, Lake Lugano's merits strike one as of quite another order. This lake is the Cinderella among the sisters, untamed, unsophisticated, and unpremeditated, a wild little thing with savage, bizarre twists and turns.

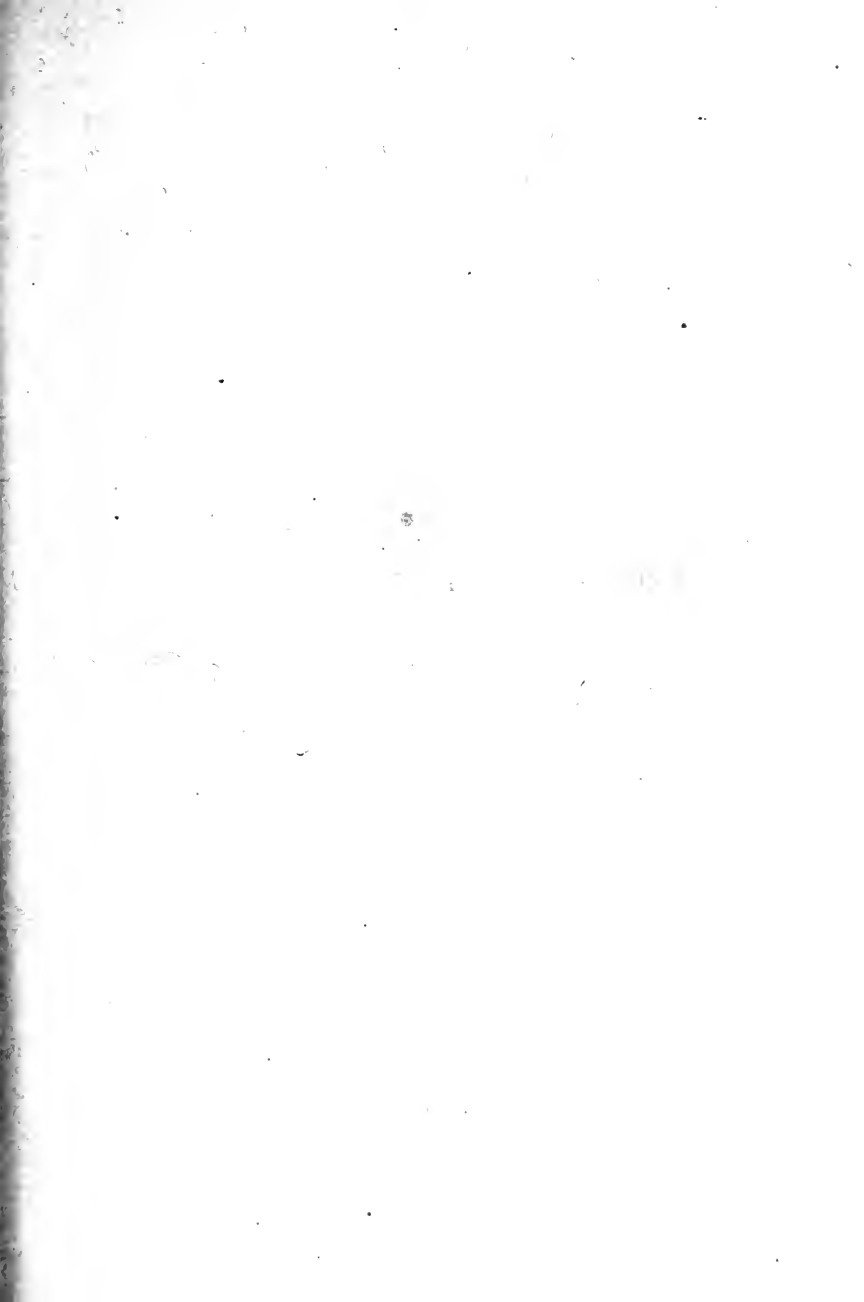
Sir John Lubbock, in "The Scenery of Switzerland," tells us that it "owes its complex form to the fact that it consists of two longitudinal and two transverse valleys dammed up by moraines." John Addington Symonds, in his "Sketches in Italy," depicts its chief beauty when he writes of it as "coloured with the tints of fluor-spar, or with the changeful green and azure of a peacock's breast." Indeed, seen from the heights, it may be fancifully likened, on a monster scale, to one of those brilliant lizards tinted in rich greens and blues, which

## *The Italian Lakes*

may be seen at times in this subalpine region. If comparisons must needs be made, Lake Lugano may be said to bear somewhat the same scenic relation to Lake Maggiore that Lake Luzern bears, for instance, to Lake Geneva.

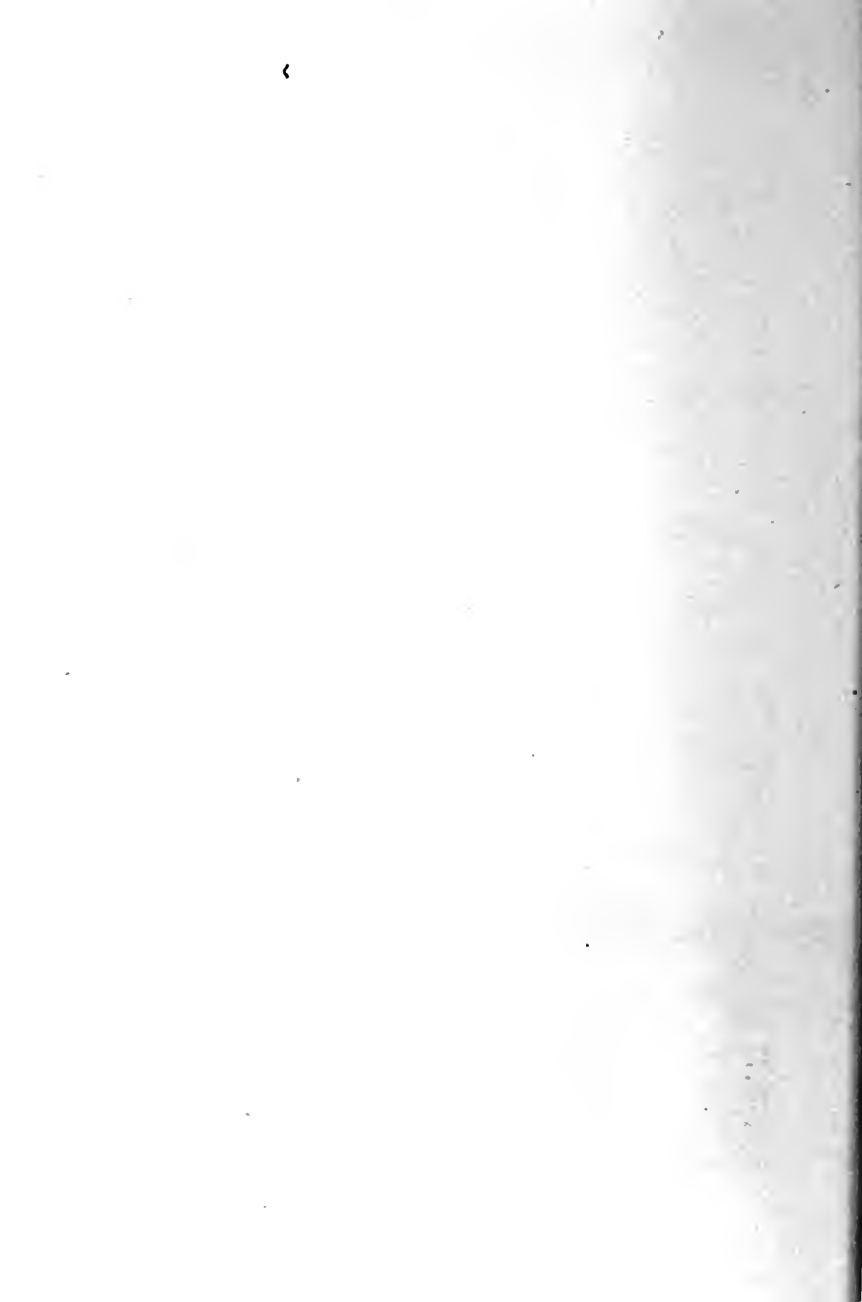
The regular tourist approaches are numerous. There is first of all the international line of the St. Gothard, which skirts a portion of its eastern and western shores and crosses from side to side between Bissone and Melide on a viaduct half a mile long. Then there is the steam-train from Luino on Lake Maggiore to pretty, bustling little Ponte Tresa, where the transfer is made to a Lugano steamboat. There is also the delightful trip over from Menaggio on Lake Como to Porlezza by miniature railroad, and thence by steamboat to the city of Lugano. Besides these generally used lines of travel there is the railroad from Varese to Porto Ceresio; while from Argegno on Lake Como a splendid road leads through the high-placed Val d'Intelvi to Osteno or to Maroggia on Lake Lugano.

Coming over from Menaggio, fresh from the exuberant villa gardens of Lake Como, the traveller may at first find Lake Lugano



**MORCOTE, ON LAKE LUGANO**







## *Lake Lugano*

a trifle sad of appearance and neglected looking, and the eye needs to accustom itself to a complete change of characteristics.

Embarking at Porlezza, we stop at Osteno with its gorges, and then touch at a series of villages, all upon the northern bank, perched in the track of the sun like a row of swallows' nests, beginning with Cima, Cressogno, and Loggio. At San Mamette there is an immensely picturesque bit. The Oriental-looking, basin-like Val Solda opens at the back, and high above are the white houses of Castello. Then follow Albogasio, Oria, Bellarma, Gandria (a considerable place), then Castagnola at the foot of Monte Bré, and, finally, prosperous Lugano, the city, with its water-front of hotels and its environs full of grace and charm.

The author has already devoted some pages to Lugano in a previous work, "Romance and Teutonic Switzerland," but it is a pleasure to tell of the place's growing attractiveness.

For all its Italian arcades and its Italian gardens, the city wears a substantial Swiss air. Thrift and progress are stamped upon it, and wealth and commerce flow into it, as befits a station on the main line between

## *The Italian Lakes*

Germany and Italy. Lugano has now also a cable line running up from the quay to the high-placed station of the St. Gothard R. R., and another line mounting to the near-by view-point, Monte San Salvatore; likewise an electric line connecting the two cable roads and branching out into the surrounding country. There are no less than three steamboat piers; the great number of hotels and *pensions* are designed to suit every purse; the shops are filled with the best of this world's goods, even English groceries being procurable; and there are walks and drives by land and excursions by water in many directions. To the east lies green Monte Bré, with vineyards and olive-trees; opposite, bare Monte Caprino, and landward, villas of growing magnificence clothe the circling hills.

Especially have the Germans long since learned to avail themselves of Lugano as a spring and autumn resort, convenient of access. Hither came Moltke and Roon after the Franco-Prussian war, and the then Crown Prince of Germany. Georg Ebers, the Egyptologist, made annual visits to Lugano, and altogether the progress of the place has been advantageously affected by

## *Lake Lugano*

the presence of these enthusiastic, well-educated, and warm-hearted visitors from north of the Alps.

During the Italian struggle for independence, from 1848 to 1866, Lugano was frequently used by Mazzini as his headquarters. The little village of Capolago, at the head of the lake, whence the railroad starts for the summit of Monte Generoso, contained the Libreria Elvetica, the famous printing-press from which revolutionary appeals to the Italian people were issued and literature was distributed. The village lies just across the frontier from Italy. At Ligornetto, off to the west from the railroad station of Mendrisio, the sculptor Vincenzo Vela was born, to whom reference is made several times in this volume. He has left a great deal of work in statuary throughout the southern slope of the Alps. A little museum containing models of his works is maintained at Ligornetto. This sculptor was one of many artistic workmen and master builders who have gone out into the world from this region or from the high-lying Val d'Intelvi.

The boundary-line between Switzerland and the countries at the southern foot of the Alps performs many curious and apparently

## *The Italian Lakes*

unaccountable tricks along its many miles of extent, but this is particularly the case on and about Lake Lugano. Here, for example, the Italian frontier takes the most astonishing tumble at the foot of Monte Generoso. The Italian village of Campione is entirely surrounded by Swiss territory, with the result that strange custom-house complications are constantly arising. Thus also, when you descend from the summit of Monte Generoso by the beautiful path which dips down in many zigzags and curves to the Val d'Intelvi, you pass from Switzerland to Italy, and an armed custom-house guard considers it necessary to search even the most harmless and innocuous knapsack for contraband. It will be of interest to botanists, for whom, indeed, the region of Lake Lugano, and especially the mountain-form of Monte Generoso, contain many delights, to learn that on rocky Monte Salvatore a little red flower grows which is said to be found nowhere else, the *Daphne Salvatoria*.

Naturally the supply of water in all the Italian lakes is largely dependent upon the condition of the snow in the mountains. This is true also of Lake Lugano. But the variation in normal times is singularly slight,

## *Lake Lugano*

and year in and year out, decade by decade, the sweet blue mountain lake with its shallows of vivid green snuggles down between its steep banks, secure and caressed by the touch of sunshine. The spring flowers peep and blossom in the neighbouring valleys, primroses, violets, periwinkles, starry anemones, and lilies of the valley. The summer heat sweeps them aside and ripens grape, fig, and olive, and the autumn garners a full vintage from the vineyards and an amazing crop from the chestnut and walnut forests.

## CHAPTER XII

### MONTE GENEROSO

THERE is something in the very name of Monte Generoso which leads us to expect great things. When we reach the summit we find it to be one of the most munificent, large-hearted, and broad-minded of our benefactors among the mountains, spreading out its welcome with panoramic gesture and inviting free inspection of its treasures in peak and plain, land and water.

All the alpine heights are friends of ours, and we like to dwell upon their good points and virtues, since from their tops the glib, the sordid, and the futile look low-down and insignificant. Even the little hillocks, to which we climb for an outlook, give us a freer aspect, and bring us nearer heaven.

But Monte Generoso somehow wins our special affection, because it gives so lavishly and profusely of its best in return for very little effort on our part. It is so situated

## *Monte Generoso*

between Lakes Lugano and Como as to dominate an area of unusual variety. From its summit can be read an epitome of the fairest and the best qualities of the Italian lakes region. Among all the mountains of the Alps, none can be found to resent the unstinted praise which tourists and travellers gladly render to this famous point of view. The topmost peaks of white are far above any petty jealousy, and fear no competition, while the lower heights look up to Monte Generoso with genuine respect and fraternal good feeling.

Monte Generoso has planned its largess on a sumptuous scale, with titanic proportions and open-handed hospitality. A mountain railway runs up to the hotel, and a short walk leads to the pinnacle of its fame,— the rock, whence lie revealed the glories of the range of the Alps, the rolling masses and serrated ridges of the fore-hills and spurs, the wealth of colour of lakes and flower-like islands and the table tapestry of the plain of Lombardy. There are several paths from the shores of Lakes Lugano and Como for those who wish to walk, but now that the railroad mounts so conveniently from Capolago, it is well to remember that these paths

## *The Italian Lakes*

can be used going down as well as up,— and even a little better.

As you slip out from the summit hotel to see the sunrise, the larks are already singing and soaring jubilantly in the half-light over the grassy slopes. The cool clean air blows fresh across a scene of extraordinary grandeur and compass. Northward the chain of the Alps lies ashen gray in the dawn, waiting for the touch of light to fire its beauties, paint its peaks in bright colours and block out its deep shadows. Below and round about, the world of the Italian lakes still sleeps before renewing the bustle and brilliancy of its daytime activities.

Then comes the sun. It picks out Monte Rosa for first honours and special favours, and tips its five-fingered *massif* with a rosy glow.

The sun now proceeds to honour by degrees all the other peaks in this amphitheatre of the Alps, in the order of their height and skyward attainment, touching them in a strict order of precedence that never varies, when the sky is clear, until its rays have surmounted the last intervening range and are seen to shine on all alike. Many of them are old-time favourites of ours, which



## *Monte Generoso*

have been seen before from other points of view, in detachments, companies, and groups, but are here brought together for a grand international review.

Standing on Swiss soil, we can let the eye sweep from the Graian Alps to the mountains of Tyrol, from France, over a good bit of Switzerland and Northern Italy to Austria. It is our privilege thus to unite all these countries in our kindly regard and profound appreciation. Beginning with the pyramidal Monte Viso, off to the west beyond Turin in Piedmont, the eye strays past Gran Paradiso to Monte Rosa and other peaks of the Zermatt region. The Matterhorn is there, but curiously dwarfed by Monte Rosa. Eastward along the line we come upon our familiar friends of the Bernese Oberland, now strangely distant in their attitude, the Aletschhorn, the Jungfrau, the Finsteraarhorn, and others. Then comes the break in the alpine wall where lies the St. Gothard Pass, and after that the Rheinwaldhorn, the mountains between Val Ticino and Lake Como, a glimpse of the mountains of the Engadine and the Splügen Pass, and finally the Colmo dei Tre Signori on the frontier of Italy and Austria.

## *The Italian Lakes*

As the sun's rays creep down into the fore-hills a cuckoo calls to the morn from below in the chestnut groves, and this call supersedes the tremulous note of an owl in the thickets; the larks careen more gaily than ever in the faultless air, and presently the cattle are seen moving out from the huts where they have spent the night. They spread out over the rolling uplands in single file, or group themselves upon the knolls, where their deep brown and brilliant buff colours contrast well with the rich green of the pastures and the pale blue of the farther mountains.

As the sun rises still higher in the heavens all the details of this surprising sub-alpine region come more boldly to the fore, — forests, watercourses, roads, villages, cultivated fields, and villages nestling in the mountain basins. Down at Melide the shallow spots in Lake Lugano show glass-green beside the azure of the deeper parts. A constant rumble ascends from the torrent near Rovio. The height of San Salvatore far below looks like a younger brother of Monte Generoso with its striking resemblance.

The town of Lugano basks beside a minia-

## *Monte Generoso*

ture Bay of Naples, and the Val d'Intelvi seems as though caught up from the world to live apart. In the direction of Lake Maggiore there are glimpses of Arona, Stresa, Isola Bella, and of the island castle at Cannero. Over there lies Bellagio like a lion couchant on its headland, dividing Lake Como into halves. Black dots of people can be seen strolling on the Bellagio quay, and the steamboat crawls across to Varenna. The town of Como itself lies hidden, but its neighbouring and characteristic Baradello tower looms up large and near. Varese, the town, shows clear and bright, and so does Varese, the lake, with its pond-like attendants, Monate and Comabbio.

Turning our backs for a moment on the mountains, and looking southward, the hills of the Brianza are seen to fall away toward the great level floor of the plain of Lombardy, where new marvels await the gaze; we pass from the sight of little white villages, clinging to the rims of mountain terraces, to the faint outlines of great cities, stretching out upon a vast alluvial valley, which is lined off with rows of Lombardy poplars and mulberry-trees. Looking closely we see roads, walls, and other signs which

## *The Italian Lakes*

humanity scratches upon the surface of the earth. As the weather and the telescope permit, Milan, Lodi, Crema, Cremona, Pavia, Piacenza, or possibly even Turin, may be seen like blurred and hazy spots upon the great stretch of mixed greens which reaches as far as the Apennines. Through the glass the cathedral of Milan looks like a chiseled gray pebble, buttressed on either side with spiders' webs.

Herein lies the great charm of the view from Monte Generoso, in this vivid contrast between the silver arctics of the Alps and the dim half-tones of the Lombardy rice-fields. Here are uninhabited wastes of ice, snow, and rock, there sleep the fruitful lowlands, fat with the olive and the vine; here nature in her most stupendous mood has carved out her most massive constructions, there man's most delicate handiwork has wrought some of the world's great masterpieces in architecture, painting, and sculpture. From Monte Generoso it is possible to see at one sweep of the eye the rude alpine hut, the monster modern hotel, furnished with the most recent inventions, and the ancient palazzo, frescoed and full of storied art; to trace the cow-path on the steep slope, the broad

## *Monte Generoso*

carriage road along the lake, and the railroad circling through the foot-hills. Over yonder, on the brink of precipices, grow the edelweiss; the gentian, and the alpine rose; down below in the fair Italian gardens that line the shores of the lakes, beautify the islands and dot the plains, waxen camellias grow profusely, lavender wistaria blossoms on house walls, and rhododendron hedges stand guard about the villas. In the heights the hawk sails slowly on the wing, and wild mountain birds dart and cry shrilly; down below pretty pigeons flap, swoop, and strut among the housetops, and nightingales sing their cadences in the thickets of the lake-side terraces.

Yes, Monte Generoso does not belie its name, and in return we can at least speak well of our grand host, and praise the good men who built the hotel and the railroad.

Geologists will be interested to know that the limestone formation of Monte Generoso contains marine fossils and petrifications. Mere laymen in matters of natural history can also learn much about the formation of lakes by observation from Monte Generoso. Under the revealing touch of the sun, the making of the Italian lakes goes on apace,

## *The Italian Lakes*

while we wait and watch. First of all, there are the clouds which are seen to gather in groups along the white snow-capped mountains and cover them here and there with big shade spots of many shapes; they hover over the violet foot-hills and drop their purple shadows on the green slopes; they stretch out gentle, caressing fingers over the cliffs and the rocky débris, to hide the sterile mountainsides and ease their lot of constant exposure and disintegration. These same clouds will some day fall as snow and hail upon the topmost peaks and cover the foot-hills with refreshing showers. The water will seek the lower level by degrees and find the lakes.

Afar off, on the glaciers, tiny globules of ice and delicate snow embroideries are even now melting under the action of the sun, and water is trickling down the seams and folds of the mountain flanks. Little streams are passing through gorge and over waterfall, and bursting forth as full-grown torrents among the southern foot-hills. They are being led over beds of mountain rubble, by many twists and turns, into the great reservoirs, called lakes, where the work of filtering and purifying turns the gray water

## *Monte Generoso*

into the superb azure which the world admires.

And so the day advances amid such sights and sounds, and the late afternoon is here with its special charms. A goat nannies for her straying young. To right and left the tinkle of many cow-bells rises and falls on the breeze. A flock of sheep nibbles on the slope, taking no notice of the great panoramic world beyond, each round, fluffy mite of cream colour casting a deep shadow to throw itself into relief. And all the while the water of the lakes below glitters like watered silk under the ruffling of the wind.

As the sun dips still farther, its slanting rays catch the corner of a lake, flood it with light and convert it into a sheet of fire. The swallows dart about with a wild provocative skim, circle, and swish of the wings. The mountains grow a trifle sullen and dark, and the valleys dim. Finally only black wavering lines tell of the presence of the ridges. But a sudden ray of the setting sun pierces through the gloom and illumines some slope with startling green. The cattle are seen to be driven in for the milking. Then comes the cleansing, fine-weather wind which draws down and whistles a little angrily

## *The Italian Lakes*

in the ravines. Otherwise a great quiet settles over mountain and lake. By and by it is quite dark in the plain, and the night comes by degrees even for us, but it will be light for a good while longer on the topmost peaks, and longest of all on Monte Rosa.

To-morrow, with the return of the first rays, the way will lie down the grassy slopes to the Val d'Intelvi and to the borders of our lowland lakes once more.



## CHAPTER XIII

### VARESE, LAKE AND CITY

THE Lake of Varese does not pretend to vie in beauty or interest with its big sisters, Lakes Maggiore, Lugano, or Como. Were it not for its situation, it might be considered a commonplace pond of largish size, somewhat more than two miles long and about half as wide, with three attendant ponds of lesser size, Biandronno, Monate, and Comabbio. The Lake of Varese is quite shallow with reedy banks; and there is next to no navigation upon it, even by rowboat. No large villages group themselves directly upon its margin, but those which may be seen in the neighbourhood have rather sought the surrounding hills. As a sheet of water the Lake of Varese is plain and uninteresting, and yet its very humility enables it to perform to perfection one of the chief functions of a lake, — it reflects. It lies at the very feet of the last spurs which the Alps

## *The Italian Lakes*

send southward to invade the plain, and mirrors a vast army of lesser and greater heights standing rank on rank against the western sky. In this lies its reward; here its glory and use as a part of the surpassing subalpine landscape. Indeed John Addington Symonds gives this simple lake high praise. He writes in his "Sketches in Italy:"

"In some picturesque respects Varese is the most perfect of the lakes. Those long lines of swelling hills, that lead into the level, yield an infinite series of placid foregrounds, pleasant to the eye by contrast with the dominant snow-summits from Monte Viso to Monte Leone."

There may be some resemblance to the English lake region, which makes this district especially attractive to English writers, for Ruskin wrote his father in 1845: "I wished for you sadly yesterday as I was driving from the Lake of Varese down to Laveno opposite Baveno. You cannot *conceive* anything so beautiful as the winding of the lakes, five or six seen at once among the mulberry woods and tufted crags. But, as I said to myself at the time, it was only the more beautiful because it was more like

## *Varese, Lake and City*

Windermere, or rather, like many Windermeres."

There is a certain distinct value about those lesser lakes which lie in the plain sufficiently far to admit of a panoramic view of the Alps. One always feels this special beauty about Lake Neuchâtel in Switzerland. It is as though, like the painter, one had stepped back from the easel, leaned his head on one side, and gained the general impression so much desired. There are days, times, moods, and seasons when these humbler lowland members among the lake family, though they seem somewhat distant connections of the Alpine lakes, display a unique beauty by the self-effacing method of reflection.

The country district in which the Lake of Varese lies goes by the name of the Varesotto. It is fertile and populous, a smiling region where rows of mulberry-trees, carefully trimmed, grow in the open fields, and vineyards clothe the slopes.

Somehow the Varesotto seems to have more than its share of those days of grateful and gracious recollection, when an extra brightness lurks in the green of the grass, the white of the road, and the blue of the

## *The Italian Lakes*

sky. The sun sends down its slanting rays between the passage of majestic clouds. In rolling folds they sail before a breeze full of enterprise and balm. Indeed a special benison accompanies the lofty travel of these clouds over the earth. Wholly white themselves, they let fall grateful shadows alike upon the tillers of the soil and the men perched in the trees packing mulberry-leaves into long bags for the silkworms; upon the oxen drawing creaking wagons along the highway; and the patient donkeys trotting gingerly in front of canvas-covered carts. And when the appeal from the thirsty earth and tired humanity becomes irresistible, the clouds, overburdened with sympathy, develop an undertone of gloom and presently dissolve in rain. Such showers may fall on the fields of the Varesotto and not touch the exotic gardens of Pallanza or the palaces on Lake Como. They come and go where there is need, they refresh and beautify, they sparkle but never spoil.

Varese, the city, is equally convenient of access from Lakes Maggiore, Lugano, or Como. It lies on the railroad running from Laveno on Lake Maggiore to Como on the lake of that name. It may also be reached

## *Varese, Lake and City*

by rail from Porto Ceresio on Lake Lugano, and of course from Milan, the great near-by metropolis. The city in no respect approaches Lugano in importance, either as a strangers' resort or as an international rendezvous; it is strictly provincial and but little affected by tourist travel. The Varesotto minds its own business, and that business is largely feeding the silkworm and spinning its shining thread.

The city is of great antiquity, like many of the places situated in the subalpine region. The remains of lake-dwellings on the banks of the Lake of Varese, similar to those discovered in Switzerland, indicate that the region was already inhabited in what is commonly known as the prehistoric age. Varese shared the vicissitudes of the Roman era and of the invasion of Teutonic nations with other settlements of its kind in the Lombard plain, participating especially in the varying fortunes of the adjacent cities of Milan and Como. It is interesting to notice that it was largely due to the umbrage taken by the people of the Swiss states of Uri and Obwalden to the treatment their cattle dealers had received at the hands of the authorities of Varese, that a Swiss invasion of the

## *The Italian Lakes*

Valle Leventina or Ticino Valley took place in 1403. That conquered district was in later times formed into the only Italian-speaking Canton of Switzerland, the Canton of Ticino. This incident and its results are treated at greater length in the author's work, "The Rise of the Swiss Republic."

In 1848 Varese was occupied by Austrian troops, and in 1859 Garibaldi with his *cacciatori delle Alpi* retreated through Varese on his way from Laveno to Como, successfully eluding the efforts of the Austrian Field-marshal Urban with ten thousand troops to bar his way. Varese was one of the first places liberated from Austrian control by Garibaldi in the same year, and was actually the first Italian city to proclaim the downfall of the Austrian government and its adhesion to the constitutional government of Victor Emmanuel II. A monument to Garibaldi's *cacciatori* has been erected in the city, facing the public school buildings, for the school youth of Varese fought under Garibaldi on the 26th of May, 1859.

Although Varese is an active, neat little city of to-day, its antiquity is very apparent in its six gates, its main street lined with arcades, columned after the Doric order, and

## *Varese, Lake and City*

its side streets which still dispense with the formality of sidewalks. An electric line runs directly from the station out to Sacro Monte or the Madonna del Monte, which ranks in interest with the pilgrimage resorts of Orta and Varallo. Though Orta may be more like a park and Varallo more like a fortress, yet the Sacro Monte of Varese is loftier than either, rising to a height of 2,890 feet above the level of the sea, and permitting a view of wide extent over mountain, rolling country, and plain. Viewed from the plain it looks for all the world like a small hill town of Tuscany or a mediæval robbers' nest. There are fourteen chapels and a church and three triumphal arches, all built gradually during the course of the seventeenth century.

When the time comes for our departure to Como, we renew our acquaintance with leisurely Italian railroad travel. Once more the vestibule of the station is crowded with passengers, who are not permitted to secure their tickets until just before the departure of the train. There is the usual lack of change at the ticket-office, the invariable helplessness of third-class passengers. There is a ringing of bells, a tooting of horns, and

## *The Italian Lakes*

a blowing of whistles. Deeply impressive cries of *pronti* or *partenza* rend the air. Frantic, breathless crowds surge around the doors. Heavy bags and sacks are pushed into third-class compartments, and a magnificent activity full of dramatic ardour plays up and down the station platform. There is a moment's quiet, then the train moves off toward Como and its lake.

Presently we shall catch our first glimpse of that body of water, famed in every corner of the earth, sung by poets both ancient and modern, and cherished in the memory by many thousand visitors.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CITY OF COMO

WHEN the Italian lakes are mentioned, the name of Como is very likely to rise first to the lips. It is a name which carries in its two short syllables a whole world of sparkle, colour, and joyousness, and an atmosphere redolent with the scent of perennial spring. Its delights constitute a permanent possession, a part of mankind's stock in trade of terrestrial romance. Its praises are sung in distant lands, by foreign fire-sides, and it has gathered for itself a veritable constituency of appreciators from among those who love that peculiar classic blending of nature and art, in which the Italians are past masters.

Many travellers catch their first glimpse of the city of Como from the high-lying St. Gothard R. R. station. They look down into a charming water basin, a snug little pocket, shut in by steep slopes and bordered

## *The Italian Lakes*

by white houses. From up there the place looks as though prepared for a siege, with its four gates and remains of walls. Water and mountains are seen to be brought into close contact and intimate relations, producing a particularly cosy effect. The slopes begin with a few vineyards and olive-trees and top off with forests of chestnut and walnut; their sides are well sprinkled with Italian villas in the customary white, yellow, or pink, perched on terraces. On the summit of the abrupt slope which overlooks Como on the east stands the Grand Hotel Brunate, reached by a cable road which has gashed a deep white line upon the green. But a carriage road also rises to the hotel on a gentle incline. Due north looms Monte Bisbino with a white church, and south the Baradello tower, a relic of the Visconti and Sforza days and a landmark of modern Como.

Descending into the city proper, we find the shore-front of Como lined with women in clusters kneeling to do the family washing, scrubbing and pounding their linen vigorously and loquaciously. By their sides lie glistening bundles of their work well done. Sharp-prowed boats are pulled up on

## *The City of Como*

the paved slant of the shore. Canvas awnings lighten up the scene. Carts, drawn by cream-coloured oxen and laden with wood or lime, crawl slowly along the quay, or a carriage with men in livery from one of the handsome villas goes by at a trot.

Como, the Roman *Comum*, is the most populous of the cities directly upon any of the Italian lakes. It is easily the most important from the standpoint of art and industry, and has quite a through trade with Switzerland. Its cathedral and its silk industry are both widely known, each for its own excellence, and during the course of its long history it has given the world a number of famous men, such as the two Plinies from Roman times and, in modern times, Volta, the electrician. The city, as a sightseeing centre, clusters very largely around the Piazza Cavour, where most of the hotels stand, and extends into the near-by cathedral square. On the water-front there is a public garden with lake baths; a jetty has been pleasantly prolonged into the open water to form a convenient harbour; there is a steamboat pier and a quay which serves the purpose of a promenade. Como also has a second rail-

## *The Italian Lakes*

road station for the lines running by Saronno to Milan and by Varese to Laveno.

A stroll through the streets assures us at once that we are in a warm-weather city. The architecture is adapted to shade and shelter from the rays of the sun. There are interior courts, arcades, loggias, and floors of rough stone or mosaic. Many little ways and means indicate a desire to let the air circulate; little stands like great chess-pawns, or stuffed cushions and bolsters are used to keep doors ajar. Should you make your entry into Como by landing at the pier, an interesting view awaits you at once across the Piazza Cavour, up a narrow street, to where gleam the fine façade and dome of the cathedral and a curious adjoining tower of rough stone.

The cathedral of Como ranks third among the Gothic structures of Italy, if the cathedral of Milan be counted first and the Certosa at Pavia second. It is in the form of a Latin cross. Originally begun in the Gothic style in 1396, it was transformed and enlarged by changes and additions in Renaissance style executed by Tommaso Rodari and his brother Giacomo in 1487 to 1526. These sculptor-architects were natives of

## *The City of Como*

Maroggia on Lake Lugano. The result of their work was to make this cathedral a masterly example of "the fusion of Gothic and Renaissance styles, both of good type and exquisite in their sobriety," as John Addington Symonds informs us in his "Sketches in Italy." On either side of the main portal are statues of the two Plinies, seated under canopies. A relief shows the elder, the naturalist, studying Vesuvius in eruption; another shows the younger, the author, kneeling to his patron and friend, the Emperor Trajan. Within the cathedral are noted paintings by Luini and Ferrari, greatly prized by connoisseurs. A side portal goes by the name of the *porta della rana*, on account of a frog watching a butterfly which is carved there.

In strange contrast to the polished cathedral is the curiously gay Broletto, or town hall, which adjoins, and is built in stripes of black and white marble with a few patches of red. It was finished in 1215, according to an inscription, and stands on fine arches, under whose kindly shelter a fruit and vegetable market has long been installed. At present the building is used as a record office, but at one time it was the

## *The Italian Lakes*

centre of the municipal life of Como, and is still graced by a balcony for public addresses, appropriately called the *parléra*. The people assembled below in *parliamento*, hence the modern word parliament. A rough-looking tower and a great ring in the wall are suggestive of prison punishment and clanking chains. Indeed the history of the city of Como has been in general an agitated one.

Its situation at the head of the principal arm of the lake caused it to attain some importance even under the Roman dominion. Indeed it was originally settled by a Greek colony, hence its Greek name *Kome* or city. It weathered the period of the Longobards, the Carolingian era, and struggled bravely to maintain municipal independence. Como passed through a period of almost constant warring with rivals, especially with Milan and Bergamo. Frederic Barbarossa and his empress once lodged in the castle Baradello. There was a period of peaceful development under Visconti rule. Two native families, the Vitani and Rusca, through their partisans fought for centuries for control of the city, alternately winning and losing, and under the Sforza sovereignty Como suffered se-

## *The City of Como*

verely from wars in which that family was involved. The city changed hands several times, coming later under Spanish and Austrian dominion. It took a prominent part in the Italian wars of independence and unity from first to last. The scene of Garibaldi's famous entry into Como after his victory over the Austrians at San Fermo is the *Porta delle Torre*, now called the *Porta Vittoria*, near which stands a statue of the great leader.

In September a local rowing regatta is held which presents a striking feature not seen outside of Italy, and worthy of the attention of sportsmen from other lands. From the gondoliers of Venice the Italian oarsmen of the lakes have learned to row and race their shells standing. The outriggers rise high above the hull, and are securely braced to withstand the pressure. The effect is exceedingly fine and bold. The rower faces the bow of the boat; one leg is placed well forward of the other, the chest is out, and the weight of the whole body is thrown into the thrust forward. It would seem that great skill must be used in balancing these frail-looking boats under such conditions,

## *The Italian Lakes*

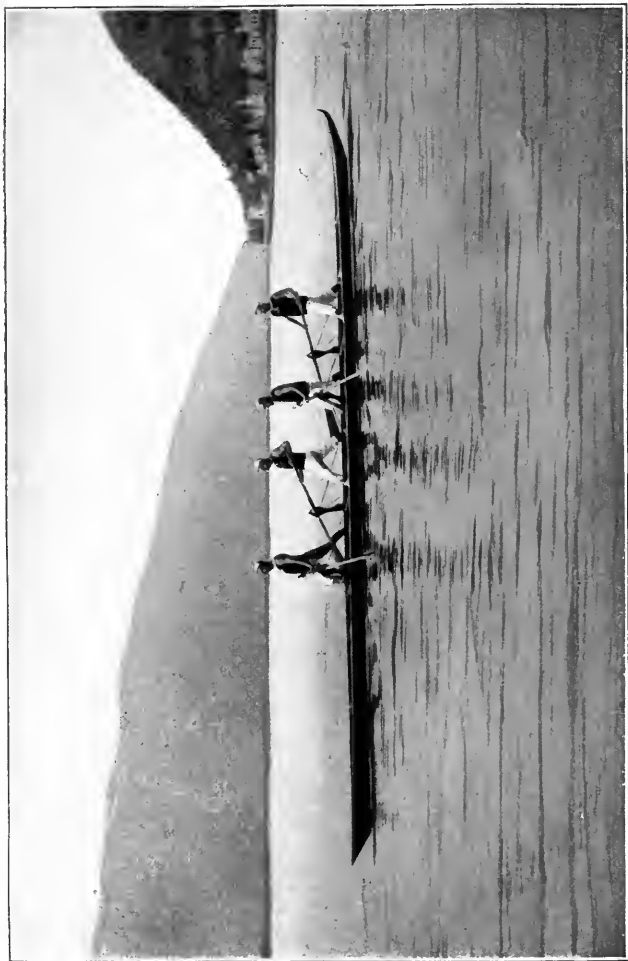
and in feathering the oars properly. "Catching a crab" would surely mean a spill.

And what noble auspices for the races. A continuous series of villas line the western shore of the lake. The water glistens and sparkles. The colours come and go, and off to the north a little cloud on Monte Bisbino, the mountain which acts as weather prophet for this greatly blessed bay, reminds us of the popular saying in Como:

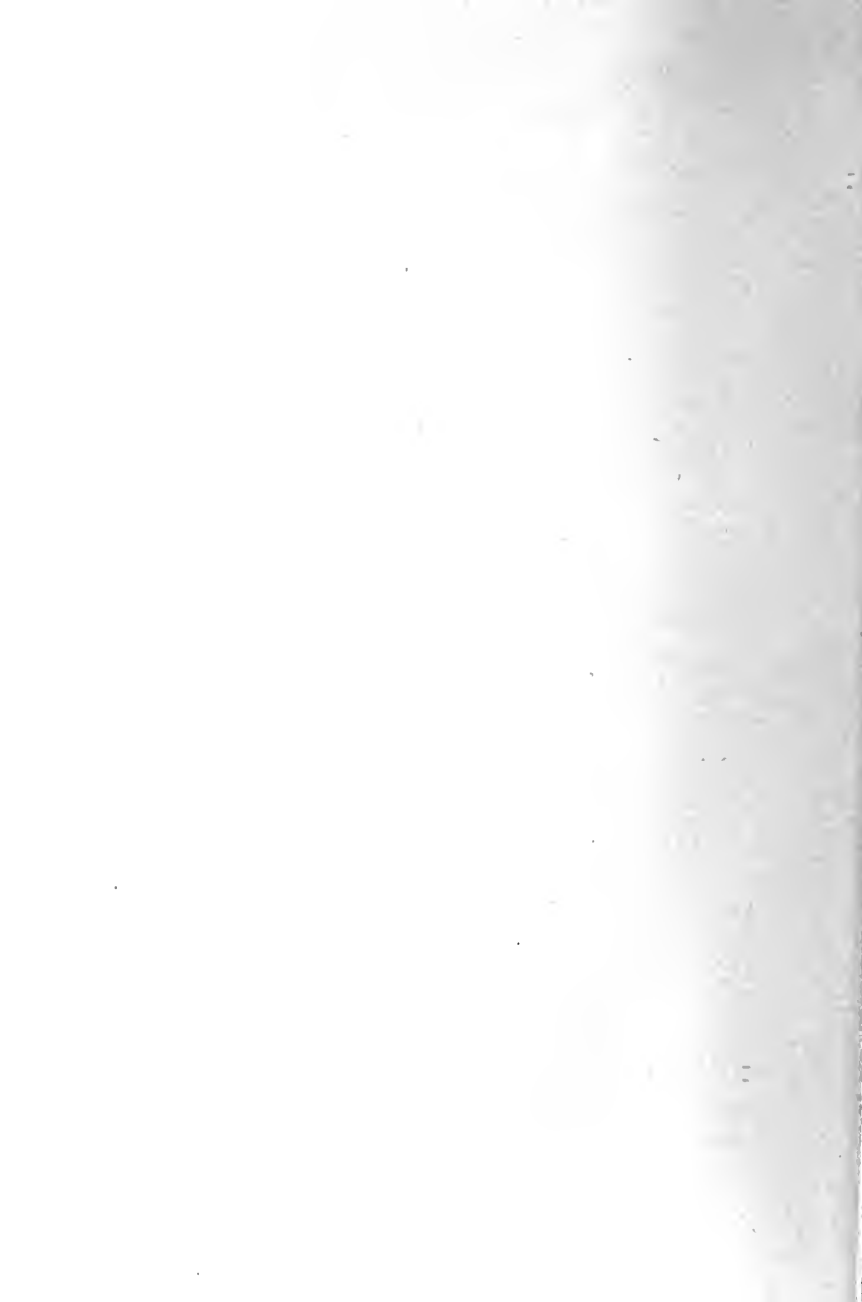
*"Se Bisbin mette il capello  
Corri a prendere il mantello."*

"When Bisbin puts on its cap  
Do you run to take your coat."





A GONDOLA-SHELL AT THE COMO REGATTA



## CHAPTER XV

SOME COMO CELEBRITIES: PLINY THE ELDER,  
PLINY THE YOUNGER, ALESSANDRO VOLTA

### *Pliny the Elder*

OF the two Plinies, whose statues have already been mentioned as adorning the façade of the Como cathedral, the elder was named Caius Plinius Secundus, and the younger, his nephew, Caius Cæcilius Secundus. The former is known for his monumental "Natural History" (*Naturalis Historia*) in thirty-seven books; the latter for his charming and often valuable "Letters." They were both natives of the Roman Comum (Como).

Pliny the Elder saw much military and legal service in the Roman state, but his fame rests rather upon his capabilities as a student of natural phenomena and as an industrious compiler of physical facts. In his "Natural History," which has come down to us almost complete, he tabulated observa-

## *The Italian Lakes*

tions and discoursed upon the stars and the earth, upon earthquakes, upon man, wild beasts, and domesticated animals, upon trees, fruits, the precious metals and precious stones, the art of painting, etc. He displayed extraordinary versatility and tireless industry in his researches.

His actual achievements as citizen and naturalist were, moreover, crowned by his personal investigation of the great eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A. D., in which catastrophe he lost his life. He was at the time in command of the Roman fleet at Misenum. Among the "Letters" of his nephew are two relating to this historic eruption, one describing his maternal uncle's movements and their sad consequence, and the other his own impressions and experiences and those of his mother during those trying days. These two letters acquire an added interest from the fact that they were written to the famous historian, Cornelius Tacitus, at the latter's special request. In Book vi., 16, of the "Letters" we read:

"Your request that I would send you an account of my uncle's death, in order to transmit a more exact relation of it to posterity, deserves my acknowledgment; for, if

this accident shall be celebrated by your pen, the glory of it, I am well assured, will be rendered for ever illustrious, and notwithstanding he perished by a misfortune, which, as it involved at the same time a most beautiful country in ruins, and destroyed so many populous cities, seems to promise him an everlasting remembrance; notwithstanding he has himself composed many and lasting works; yet I am persuaded, the mentioning of him in your immortal writings will greatly contribute to render his name immortal. . . .

He was at that time with the fleet under his command at Misenum. On the 24th of August, about one in the forenoon, my mother desired him to observe a cloud which appeared of a very unusual size and shape. He had just taken a turn in the sun, and after bathing himself in cold water, and making a light luncheon, gone back to his books: he immediately arose and went out upon a rising ground, from whence he might get a better sight of this very uncommon appearance. A cloud, from which mountain was uncertain, at this distance (but it was found afterward to come from Mount Vesuvius) was ascending, the appearance of which I cannot give you a more exact de-

## *The Italian Lakes*

scription of than by likening it to that of a pine-tree, for it shot up to a great height in the form of a very tall trunk, which spread itself out at the top into a sort of branches; occasioned, I imagine, either by a sudden gust of air that impelled it, the force of which decreased as it advanced upwards, or the cloud itself being pressed back again by its own weight, expanded in the manner I have mentioned; it appeared sometimes bright and sometimes dark and spotted, according as it was either more or less impregnated with earth and cinders. This phenomenon seemed to a man of such learning and research as my uncle extraordinary and worth further looking into. He ordered a light vessel to be got ready, and gave me leave, if I liked, to accompany him. I said I had rather go on with my work; and it so happened he had himself given me something to write out. As he was coming out of the house, he received a note from Rec-tina, the wife of Bassus, who was in the utmost alarm at the imminent danger which threatened her; for her villa lying at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, there was no way of escape but by sea; she earnestly entreated him therefore to come to her assistance. He

## *Pliny the Elder*

accordingly changed his first intention, and what he had begun from a philosophical, he now carried out in a noble and generous, spirit. He ordered the galleys to put to sea, and went himself on board with an intention of assisting not only Rectina, but the several other towns which lay thickly strewn along that beautiful coast. Hastening then to the place from whence others fled with the utmost terror, he steered his course direct to the point of danger, and with so much calmness and presence of mind as to be able to make and dictate his observations upon the motion and all the phenomena of that dreadful scene. He was now so close to the mountain that the cinders, which grew thicker and hotter the nearer he approached, fell into the ships, together with pumice-stones and black pieces of burning rock: they were in danger, too, not only of being aground by the sudden retreat of the sea, but also from the vast fragments which rolled down from the mountain and obstructed all the shore. Here he stopped to consider whether he should turn back again; to which the pilot advising him, 'Fortune,' said he, 'favours the brave; steer to where Pomponianus is.' Pomponianus was then at

## *The Italian Lakes*

Stabiæ [modern Castellamare], separated by a bay, which the sea, after several insensible windings, forms with the shore. He had already sent his baggage on board; for though he was not at that time in actual danger, yet being within sight of it, and indeed extremely near, if it should in the least increase, he was determined to put to sea as soon as the wind, which was blowing dead inshore, should go down. It was favourable, however, for carrying my uncle to Pomponianus, whom he found in the greatest consternation: he embraced him tenderly, encouraging and urging him to keep up his spirits, and, the more effectually to soothe his fears by seeming unconcerned himself, ordered a bath to be got ready, and then, after having bathed, sat down to supper with great cheerfulness, or at least (what is just as heroic) with every appearance of it. Meanwhile broad flames shone out in several places from Mount Vesuvius, which the darkness of night contributed to render still brighter and clearer."

The account goes on to state that Pliny then went to bed and slept soundly, until the stones and ashes were so deep that a decision had to be taken to escape. The



## *Pliny the Younger*

party finally decided to tie pillows over their heads and ventured forth, but down at the shore they found the waves still running too high to permit them to embark. There Pliny lay down upon a sail-cloth. At this juncture flames, preceded by a strong whiff of sulphur, dispersed the party, and Pliny was apparently suffocated by the noxious fumes.

In his other letter to Tacitus, Pliny the Younger gives a dramatic recital of his own feelings and those of his mother at Misenum, while waiting in vain for his uncle's return, and wandering about in the phenomenal darkness. The mother and son both fortunately escaped unhurt.

## *Pliny the Younger*

As revealed by his "Letters" and by the facts of his career, the younger Pliny was an excellent type of a public-spirited Roman gentleman, having considerable administrative and literary talent. Like his uncle, he belonged to the nobility of the Roman Comum (Como), where he was born in 61 or 62 A. D. His father died while he was still a boy, and he was placed under the guardi-

## *The Italian Lakes*

anship of Verginius Rufus. He was sent to Rome to finish his studies; became a pleader in the Roman courts; and rose steadily in the service of the state, through various positions of trust and preferment. He was made a member of the Senate, and by steady advancement a military tribune, a quæstor, prætor, præfect, and consul. He saw service in Syria and as imperial legate in Bithynia and Pontica. His famous book of "Letters" consists of a selection which he made from his correspondence with his friends. Besides the letters to Tacitus already mentioned, unique value attaches to Pliny's correspondence with his friend, the Emperor Trajan, upon the subject of the Christians. This correspondence is considered of paramount value as historic evidence of the condition of the Christians toward the end of the first century and of the peculiar official Roman point of view toward a supposedly incomprehensible sect which was making great headway. Pliny's inquiry of Trajan and the latter's reply are here appended. In Book x., 97, we read:

"It is my invariable rule, sir, to refer to you in all matters where I feel doubtful; for who is more capable of removing my

## *Pliny the Younger*

scruples, or informing my ignorance? Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them. Whether, therefore, any difference is usually made with respect to ages, or no distinction is to be made between the young and the adult; whether repentance entitles them to a pardon, or, if a man has been once a Christian, it avails nothing to desist from his error; whether the very profession of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only the crimes themselves inherent in the profession are punishable; on all these points I am in great doubt. In the meanwhile, the method I have observed toward those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished: for I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved correction. There

## *The Italian Lakes*

were others also brought before me possessed with the same infatuation, but being Roman citizens, I directed them to be sent to Rome. But this crime spreading (as is usually the case) while it was actually under prosecution, several instances of the same nature occurred. An anonymous information was laid before me, containing a charge against several persons, who upon examination denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered religious rites with wine and incense before your statue (which for that purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these compliances. I thought it proper to discharge them. Some among those who were accused by a witness in person at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it. The rest owned indeed that they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years) renounced that error. They also worshipped your statue and the image of the gods, uttering imprecations at the

## *Pliny the Younger*

same time against the name of Christ. They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was that they met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purpose of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies. After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavour to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious rites; but all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. I deemed it expedient, therefore, to adjourn all further proceedings, in order to consult you. For it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of

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those prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighbouring villages and country. Nevertheless, it still seems possible to restrain its progress. The temples, at least, which were once almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred rites, after a long intermission, are again revived; while there is a general demand for victims, which till lately found very few purchasers. From all this it is easy to conjecture what numbers might be reclaimed if a general pardon were granted to those who shall repent of their error."

To this letter Trajan replied, Book x., 98:

"You have adopted the right course, my dearest Secundus, in investigating the charges against the Christians who were brought before you. It is not possible to lay down any general rule for all such cases. Do not go out of your way to look for them. If indeed they should be brought before you, and the crime is proved, they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that where the party denies he is a Christian, and shall

## *Pliny the Younger*

make it evident that he is not, by invoking our gods, let him (notwithstanding any former suspicion) be pardoned upon his repentance. Anonymous informations ought not to be received in any sort of prosecution. It is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age."

Pliny the Younger inherited considerable property on and near Lake Como, both from his father's and mother's families. In Book ix., 7, of his "Letters" he writes to Romanus:

"I have several villas upon the borders of this lake, but there are two particularly in which, as I take most delight, so they give me most employment. They are both situated like those at Baiæ: one of them stands upon a rock, and overlooks the lake, the other actually touches it. The first, supported as it were by the lofty buskin, I call my tragic; the other, as resting upon the humble sock, my comic villa. Each has its own peculiar charm, recommending it to its possessor so much more on account of this very difference. The former commands a wider, the latter enjoys a nearer view of the lake. One, by a gentle curve, embraces a little bay; the other, being built upon a

## *The Italian Lakes*

greater height, forms two. Here you have a strait walk extending itself along the banks of the lake; there a spacious terrace that falls by a gentle descent toward it. The former does not feel the force of the waves; the latter breaks them; from that you see the fishing-vessels; from this you may fish yourself, and throw your line out of your room, and almost from your bed, as from off a boat. It is the beauties, therefore, these agreeable villas possess that tempt me to add to them those which are wanting."

Various attempts have been made to find the sites of these two villas of Pliny, playfully compared to the lofty and low *cothurnus* and *soccus* of the tragic and comic actors respectively. A reasonable inference, from the somewhat vague description given above, would place the "Tragedy" at Bellagio and the "Comedy" at Lenno, on the opposite shore, south of Tremezzo. Pliny also owned a large estate in Etruria, a suburban villa near Rome, and others at Tusculum, Tibur, and Præneste. His acts of munificence and liberality toward his native city and his friends were remarkable. It is calculated that he spent no less than 1,600,000 sesterces on Como for a school, a public library, and



## *Alessandro Volta*

public baths, and various charitable bequests, also for the maintenance of boys and girls and of a hundred of his freedmen. In Book viii., 22, Pliny announces the following motto for himself, worthy of the Christians whom he persecuted: "To pardon others as if one daily needed pardon himself."

## *Alessandro Volta*

Among Como celebrities mention must also be made of the man from whose name the electrical term *volt* has been derived. Alessandro Volta is now generally conceded to have been the originator of the electric pile. He is credited with having constructed the first contrivance by which electrical energy could be measured in definite units. Como has erected a statue to him and named a piazza in his honour.

In May of 1899 an electrical exhibition was held in Como to celebrate his discovery. Fire, however, swept over the entire exhibition and destroyed almost all the souvenirs of his career, which had been preserved up to that time. Electrical apparatus and machinery from many countries had been displayed. There had been a competition of

## *The Italian Lakes*

telegraphers. In connection with the celebration the Italian and especially the Como silk industry had been largely represented, and electric launches and boats had constituted a prominent feature of the exhibition.

Alessandro Volta was born in Como. In 1774 he was made professor of physics in the gymnasium of his native city. He visited Switzerland and became intimately acquainted with De Saussure. Then he was appointed to the chair of physics in the university of Pavia. He later travelled through France, Germany, Holland, and England, and met nearly all the celebrities of that day in natural science. In 1791 he received the Copley medal of the Royal Society, and his electric pile was first described by him in a letter to Sir G. Banks, the president of that society in 1800. Honours were showered upon him. In 1801 Napoleon I. called him to Paris and a medal was struck in his honour. He was created a Senator of the Kingdom of Lombardy. In 1815 the Emperor of Austria made him director of the philosophical faculty of Padua. In 1819 he withdrew to his native city of Como and settled down there for the rest of his life.

Volta may be said to have carried forward

## *Alessandro Volta*

the investigations of Benjamin Franklin. He followed closely the experiments of Galvani, and then showed that so-called "galvanism" and electricity were identical. He also corresponded with Priestley, and made experiments before Lavoisier and Laplace in Paris.

## CHAPTER XVI

### SILKWORMS AND SILK - LOOMS

WHOEVER skirts the shores of the Italian lakes, or follows the fringe of the Alps, where their outposts touch the Italian plain, is sure to come upon evidences of a great industry, which means much to the economic life of the peninsular kingdom.

As we journey from Piedmont through Lombardy to Venetia, and watch the fertile expanses from the windows of a train or a carriage, the picture of trees planted in parallel lines across the fields keeps repeating itself acre by acre, mile after mile. If the season be that of June or early July, men will be detected perched in these trees, carefully stripping them of their leaves and filling long sacks with them. These are mulberry-trees, and their leaves are for the feeding of the voracious silkworms, which make the cocoons from which in turn the raw silk

## *Silkworms and Silk-looms*

is reeled off, so that silk stuffs may be woven with the strong lustrous thread.

No sooner have the trees been stripped of their leaves than the bare branches are pruned and trimmed to a nicety and the ground cultivated and fertilized. The farmers give these trees the same care which they would bestow on their choicest orchard trees. Indeed there are regular mulberry-tree nurseries in some parts of Italy, the leaves being available for feeding the silkworms the fourth year after transplantation. The mulberry-tree is of slow growth and lives to a great age.

If you step into one of the cottages, where the worms are being fed into cocoons, you will find wide shelves filled with the large worms averaging about two inches in length. The mulberry leaves are thrown down upon the worms, and they work their way through, eating and scrunching the crisp green. If you put your ear to the shelf, the sound of the feeding is like that of the gentle pattering of rain upon a tin roof. The worms feed without halt for a certain number of days, then stop for a short interval, and then resume their feeding again. Having passed through these regular periods of activity

## *The Italian Lakes*

and inactivity, the worms grow yellowish in colour, and are then ready to climb into the dried branches which are set up at the back of the shelves. This miniature forest is called technically the *boscho*. Here the worms proceed to fasten themselves to the branches by a network of silk thread, and then to wind the thread about them with a peculiar swaying and turning motion of the head. The result is to form cocoons completely hiding the worms. The colour of the cocoon is generally rich salmon, and as the traveller sees these wares, packed in crates and being carted over country roads, or sorted in great baskets at the silk markets of the cities, they present a peculiar luminous brilliancy which stands out vividly in the recollection. In course of time the worm, wrapped within the cocoon, if left to its own sweet will, would eat its way out again and emerge as a butterfly. But for the purposes of silk culture, this time must not be awaited. The cocoon is placed in water of a temperature above  $140^{\circ}$  F., and the thread is reeled off into skeins of raw silk. There is but one crop of cocoons a year, and it is collected generally in June and during the first part of July.

## *Silkworms and Silk-looms*

The reeling is done by hand labour, sometimes in the cottages, but now generally in large establishments. The unwinding of the single thread from the cocoon demands such manual dexterity and delicacy of touch that the work is done by women and girls only, the men and boys not being employed in this branch of sericulture. At this writing, all attempts to substitute mechanical devices for hand labour in this particular process are said to have failed. It is calculated that it takes from eleven to twelve pounds of fresh cocoons to make one pound of raw silk.

Italy is the third in the list of silk-producing countries, China and Japan alone exceeding her in production. As an indication of the extent to which this industry has grown in Italy, it may be stated that during recent years the annual production has been over twelve million pounds of raw silk, valued at over \$46,000,000. About a million and a half of persons are engaged in one way or another in the various branches of silk industry. Piedmont has the reputation of raising the largest numbers of cocoons, but Milan in Lombardy is the centre of the manufacturing side of sericulture, and Como has

## *The Italian Lakes*

proved itself to be a mainstay of the industry during times of storm and stress.

The history of sericulture in Italy is full of interest. The industry is as old as the period of Roger II., King of the Two Sicilies. Already in the thirteenth century Italy was able to compete successfully with Spain and the Levant. The industry reached the climax of its perfection and importance during the heyday of civic life in the Italian Republics, but it declined with the conquest of Italy by foreigners. The experts and artisans largely emigrated to other European countries, thus transplanting their knowledge to foreign fields, which soon entered into competition with the Italian producers. As late as 1860 the silk industry of Italy, as a whole, was still at a low ebb and had not yet felt the reviving touch of modern enterprise. But it is interesting to know that from the time of its introduction into Como, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the silk industry was never allowed to die out entirely in that city, but was constantly kept alive through varying vicissitudes of internecine war and foreign conquest and periods of depression and lassitude. A certain Pietro Boldoni of Bellano on Lake



## *Silkworms and Silk-looms*

Como was the first to establish the silk industry in the city of Como in the year 1510. Up to that time the woollen industry had flourished there, but after that silk gradually forged ahead. At the exposition, held in Como in 1899 to celebrate Volta's discovery of the electric pile, the whole of Europe was able to admire the wonderful silks which Como is now able to manufacture.

The country round about is permeated with the various activities demanded by the industry, exemplified from mulberry-trees to finished dress goods. All the intermediate stages are there for inspection. Landowner, peasant, labourer, and manufacturer, men, women, and children, are knit together as closely as one of their own fabrics in a common enterprise of absorbing interest and immense range. The traveller cannot fail to wish for this whole region a just distribution of profits, and is spurred to do his share in furthering the welfare of all by taking a kindly interest in land and people.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE COSTUME OF THE BRIANZA

THE traveller cannot be long in Lombardy before his attention is attracted to the singularly picturesque costume of the Brianza. It is generally worn in its full richness by nurses in the wealthier families, and so is seen almost as often in the cities as in the Brianza itself, whence these nurses mostly come, and where it is now mostly a holiday affair.

Imagine a head-dress of silver needles so placed in the hair as to fashion an aureole; let the ears be weighted with massive rings, and a kerchief decorated with a large flower pattern be thrown over the shoulders, and it is easy to see that the costume possesses properties of great promise and high colour. The peasant women add to this costume the pretty little wooden slippers that click and clatter over the cobbled country lanes. Some



THE COSTUME OF THE BRIANZA



## *The Costume of the Brianza*

forty or fifty years ago the peasant women all wore the full skirt, black bodice, and short sleeves, and the piece of cloth which crossed the foot to keep on the slipper was embroidered. Nor was the silver aureole ever missed from a married woman's head. To-day the costume is yielding rapidly to the advance of world uniformity in fashions. The silver needles are called collectively *l'argento*; they are generally a present from the groom to the bride, and the simpler ones cost about forty-five to fifty lire.

So much time and skill are required in fitting the needles into the strands of hair that only the big horizontal needles are taken off at night, the rest being worn even in sleep, much as the Japanese women are said to treat their elaborate head-dresses. If the traveller in the Brianza exclaims at the seeming inconvenience of this method of treating the hair, he is assured that the women need have their hair *done up* only once a week.

The Brianza may be described in a general way as that triangular-shaped region included between the Como and Lecco arms of Lake Como. It is a district of special charm, greatly favoured by situation and

## *The Italian Lakes*

fertility, rich in cultivated stretches, and mounting to forests and hill pastures. It is the abiding-place of cattle, horses, and sheep, and its lowlands are graced by several small lakes, Annone, Pusiano, Alserio, Segrino, and Montorfano. The great painter Segantini, to whom a special chapter has been assigned in this book, executed some of his earliest work in this region. The silk industry has its mulberry-trees and factories profusely scattered in the Brianza.

The small town of Erba is nearly in the geographical centre of the Brianza, about midway between the cities of Como and Lecco, but also directly accessible from Milan by rail, and by carriage road from Bellagio, at the tip of the triangle. This latter drive, from Erba to Bellagio by way of Canzo and Civenna, is among the most delightful in the entire region of the Italian lakes; from Civenna it is full of extended views over the lake arms of Lecco and Como, the smiling Tremezzina, and off to the sky-line near Chiavenna, where stand the dark bulwarks of the Engadine acting as pedestals for the silver statues of the North.

From Como the art lover should not fail to make an excursion to Saronno, about half-

## *The Costume of the Brianza*

way to Milan by rail. At Saronno the best of the work of Luini and Gaudenzio Ferrari is to be seen in the pilgrimage church.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### UP THE LAKE OF COMO

#### *From Como to Bellagio*

A GAY Italian flag flutters expectantly at the stern of the saloon steamer, which is moored to the dock and seems impatient to be off,—to round the little jetty and be out of the harbour. Once in awhile the boat's whistle blows or the machinery gives a sudden turn and churns the blue water into white, like a restive steed pawing the ground and champing the bit.

These Como boats have an air of special fitness and importance. They are altogether the best of any to be found on the Italian lakes. Indeed they are no mere pleasure craft, designed for picnics on summer days. There is nothing amateurish about them. They mean business and they look it, for they really serve as the regular means of communication between almost all points



## *Up the Lake of Como*

on the lake. Without them many a village would be dependent on some narrow bridle-path for its only connection with the outside world. It is a distinctive charm of Lake Como that whole stretches of its shores seem almost cut off from landward approach, and must turn to water transportation for their chief traffic.

These considerations add special bustle and activity to the coming and going of the second-class passengers who crowd the lower deck. These people act as though they were going on an ocean voyage, although they are only bound up the lake to their homes in various little lakeside and mountain nests. The farewells are melodramatic, the last messages to friends on the shore are shrill with intensity. Considerable freight also is carried at the bow and along the sides. Probably it is this freight which frequently interferes with the schedule time of these boats.

As we take our places on the saloon-deck, and look about us upon the unique scenery, we wonder where the steamboat is going to find an outlet among the converging hills for its trip up the lake, to explore the famous windings of Lake Como, unravel its sur-

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prises, and take us to bask in its open bays. The breeze, blowing through the gaps, seems to come from pretty much all points of the compass at once.

Among the spectators on shore, watching the departure, stands a Brianza nurse with baby in arms, a silver aureole about her head. Hotel porters, clad in the vivid green aprons of their profession, hurry up with baggage or loiter near by for their fees, busy about nothing. Omnibuses full of tourists arrive at the landing. Some belated peasants scurry aboard, carrying nondescript linen bags containing their all of worldly goods. There are some last violent gesticulations to friends on shore, the whistle blows a final blast, the gangplank rattles, and the boat moves off dramatically and proudly for its superb journey upon the lake waters, which are now glittering joyously under the action of sun and breeze.

The extraordinary variety of the scenery on Lake Como, which, after all, is only some thirty miles in length, almost passes belief. It is theatrical in the sense that one situation develops surprises from another. Every corner reveals sudden vistas, every valley that finds its way to the water's edge opens up



A PEASANT WOMAN OF LAKE COMO



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a new world. The tropical touch of Italy reaches out for the Alps. The Lake of Como is at the point of contact. Its waters of shifting colours reflect flat-topped houses which might be in Greece or in some Oriental country, and at the same time these waters also duplicate the lofty peaks of summer snow. North and south blend in an atmosphere of limpid balm freshened with the breath from the mountains.

The moment the boat has found its way out of the basin of Como, beyond the Punta di Geno, a view never to be forgotten leaps into sight. You are ready to exclaim that there is only one Lake of Como after all. If at that moment you were asked to pick your choice among the Italian lakes, no matter how impartial you might wish to be, one look at the shores lined with villas, the villages clustering in horizontal lines on either side, the headland just ahead thick with dwellings, the many tints on house walls, the gardens, the mountain backgrounds, the colour, and the atmosphere would doubtless quickly decide you to break your reserve and vote for Como. But it is not necessary to compare, sufficient is it to

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enjoy what there is where we are. Then let us see how matters stand.

Many villas succeed each other on either shore, converting the outskirts of Como into veritable parks. On the western shore the suburb of San Giorgio is seen to give place to the famous Villa dell' Olmo, the princely property of Duke Visconti-Modrone. It is generally conceded to have been built upon the site of a Roman villa which belonged to Caninius Rufus, friend of Pliny the Younger. Its beautiful park is open to visitors.

At Cernobbio there is the famous Villa d'Este, now turned into a hotel. The remarkable gardens, cascades, hillside fortifications, and especially the noble forest at the back, are full of interest. The place has kept much of its original architecture and ancient woodland beauty. Built in 1568 by Cardinal Gallio, a native of Cernobbio, it passed at the beginning of the nineteenth century into the hands of the unfortunate Caroline, wife of George IV. of England, who enlarged it and renamed it Villa d'Este, living there five years and maintaining a species of court.

As the steamer skirts the shore, the

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glimpses lengthen into a panorama. Here a silent cypress is thrown into relief by light green foliage behind. Olive-trees, almond-trees, and mulberry-trees grow along the terraces, where vases with brilliant flowers punctuate the horizontal lines. Ornate boat-houses and gay pavilions abound. In the very exuberance of colour-fancy, some house walls have even been painted in checker-board designs of yellow and black. A sky-blue house also gladdens the scene, — it looks as though it had been in the wash and retained some of the bluing, — and the mock windows painted upon the houses are so numerous that one even begins to suspect the genuine windows of being artificial. Some roofs are gray with flat stones, others red with tiles.

Our steamer does not find piers at every station, but at some places merely exchanges passengers and mails with small boats that dash up and are cleverly managed to catch the big steamboat on the fly, without making it come to a complete halt. At pretty little Torno there are a few moments of rest, while bags of mulberry leaves for feeding the voracious silkworms are trundled aboard. At this point the character of the lake is very

## *The Italian Lakes*

intimate, friendly, and neighbourly. A big barge turned on its side is being repaired on the shelving shore. Another is crawling along the lee shore to escape a contrary wind. Peculiar cockle-shell boats with sharp bows and white awnings crowd the shelter of tiny harbours and mysterious archways. Arbours full of dappled reflected sunshine overlook the lake, and steps lead invitingly down the walls to the water's edge.

Not far from Torno is the large squarely built Villa Pliniana standing close to the shore in a solitary little bay. The actual building was erected by Count Giovanni Anguissola in the sixteenth century, and the villa derives its name from an intermittent spring which was noted and described by Pliny the Younger in a letter to Licinius Surra (Epist. v., 7). The spring ebbs and flows three times a day. Its waters are gathered in a species of *atrium* and thence flow under the villa into the lake. From the water one can catch a glimpse of the cliffs at the back, of a cascade, of gardens rising in terraces, and sombre cypresses standing thickly about. The present owner of the villa is a member of the family of



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Belgiojoso, a descendant of the authoress, Cristina Belgiojoso.

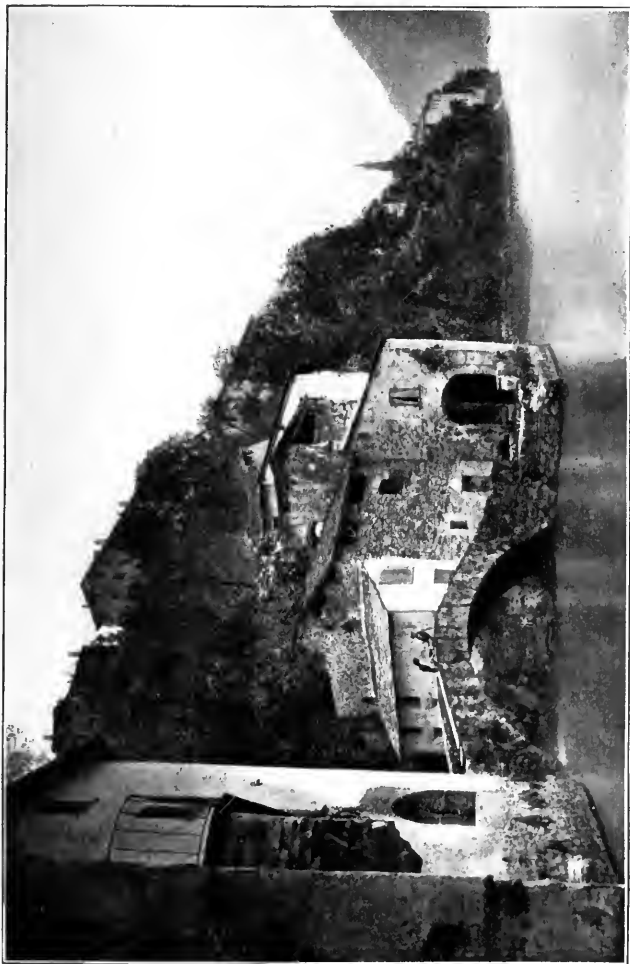
After the headland of Torrighia the lake widens. It deepens in colour and the shores rise higher on either hand. The tops of the mountains emerge above the timber-line and are smooth with green pastures, where little hovering clouds timidly drop their wavering shadows. Lone little villages lie white and still in rocky basins above the ravines. What must life be like up there in those eyries flattened against the mountains?

At the lakeside hamlet of Nesso there is a delightful bit ready-made for the artist. A few quaint houses have taken root there upon the precipitous shore, among the walnut and chestnut trees, the cypresses, and the rich myrtles and trailing vines. These houses cluster in haphazard fashion, where they can gain standing-room, and a romantically inclined bridle-path winds in and out among them along the shore. A dark ravine cuts the hamlet in two, and from its recesses a waterfall tumbles boisterously into the lake. When the bridle-path in its peregrinations reaches the ravine, it leaps gracefully over the seething torrent from one house to another by a bridge of a single span, and con-

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tinues beyond to insinuate itself in and out, around and through the houses in the most natural manner, as if it had performed no unusual feat at all. As our boat passes, two men idling on the parapet of the bridge give the lonely little place life and further local interest.

But larger prospects lie before us. As the boat crosses from Nesso to Argegno, the greater splendour of Lake Como begins to assert itself and proclaim world-renowned beauties. While the view up on high becomes frankly alpine, especially if some chance flurry of snow has recently touched the mountain-tops; down below, upon the water level, in delicious contrast to the rugged quality of the heights, the fertile mazes of the Tremezzina now reveal themselves on the western shore, and the eastern shore is seen to draw down to a point which presently discloses itself as the headland of Bellagio. But first the boat stops at Argegno, at the entrance of the Val d'Intelvi. White zigzags appear upon the mountain flank. They indicate the road which leads to Lake Lugano and thus to Swiss soil, and this road accounts for the presence of custom-house officers, who lounge around the



NESSO, ON LAKE COMO



## *Up the Lake of Como*

landing-place in their uniforms trimmed with bright yellow, and for the officer who comes on board to watch for stray smugglers.

From Argegno, as far as Tremezzo, a cobbled bridle-path skirts the western shore, rising and falling according to the nature of the ground and the demands of traffic, curving in graceful lines over the little terraces, where olives and almonds grow, — an accommodating path, leisurely and friendly, full of a delightful waywardness and indirectness, knowing no hurry, but caressing the mountains as it passes, and spanning the truculent torrents and mountain brooks on great stilts of bridges, pushing its inquisitive length even into the villages by boring its way through the first floors of the houses and converting them into arcades.

This path is a sauntering Red Riding Hood. It seems to loiter once in awhile for a special outlook on lake and mountain, to listen to the songs of the nightingales in the thickets, or to smell the verdant hill-sides. At times it loses itself in mazes of myrtle and rhododendron hedges, and when we think it surely must have come to a stop at last, it suddenly reappears as debonair as ever at some point of special vantage,

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wearing a provocative expression which might be translated into, "Don't you wish you knew where I've been?" The life along this path and in the villages which it serves seems as remote as the middle ages. There is no shriek nor puff of steam, not even the rattle of a carriage along the whole of its course, only the gentle clattering of patient little donkeys treading its cobbles daintily, the clicking of women's wooden sandals, the laugh and song of people homeward bound from the vineyards after the day's work is done, the barn-yard sounds, and, when the path dips down to the water, the usual noises of the voluble Italian lake-front.

Between Sala and Campo, separated from the shore by a sheltered sheet of water, lies the ancient Isola Comacina, the only island in the whole lake. With its name is associated much history, for upon this little wooded isle imperial Roman civilization made a last stand in its tremendous struggle against the Lombard invasion from the north. The island was heavily fortified, and, while almost the whole of Italy had accepted Lombard rule, here the defenders of the ancient order, with its allegiance to the Roman emperor at Byzantium, prepared to

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resist. The Italians, under a General Francioni, withstood a siege of six months, and then capitulated to the Lombards on good terms and were allowed to retreat to Ravenna. During the subsequent quarrels among the Lombards themselves, the island often served as a refuge for the persecuted or for conspirators. It was finally laid waste in 1169 by the people of Como, who carried on a relentless feud with its inhabitants. At present it is almost untenanted, a little church being the only building visible.

On the headland, known as the Punta Balbianello, stands the Villa Arcomati-Visconti, which serves to usher us into the charms of the Tremezzina district. A colonnade covers the backbone of the headland, forming a sort of a bilateral belvedere, with views up and down the lake. This villa stands as it were on the dividing line between the natural and unsophisticated scenery of the lake having Argegno as its centre, and that highly cultivated, spectacular region of astonishing scenic and artistic effects which circles around Bellagio.

After turning the corner of the Punta Balbianello, the boat glides into a nearer view

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of that rich country and lakeside which lie between Lenno and the farther side of Cadenabbia, stretched out upon the slope and across the feet of Monte Crocione, thickly strewn with gardens, perfumed with countless flowers, resonant with the song of nightingales, and bright with a never-failing air of eternal spring, — in a word, the Tremezzina. The boat makes stops at Tremezzo and Cadenabbia, and then crosses to Bellagio. Lakes Como and Maggiore have this in common, that they are both divided by great headlands, Maggiore at Pallanza and Como at Bellagio. The name Bellagio is reputed to be a corruption of the Latin *Bilacus* (Double Lake). Indeed, the headland divides the whole lake into a shape like an inverted Y, the eastern horn of which assumes the name of the Lake of Lecco.

On this great open bay of Bellagio there are at least five favourite stopping-places, Bellagio itself, Tremezzo, Cadenabbia, Menaggio, and Varenna. The writer does not urge the merits of any one of these upon the traveller, for their virtues will speak for themselves, but points out that Tremezzo should not be overlooked in making a choice, though the place may seem to lie a little to



## *Up the Lake of Como*

one side, yet so short are the distances that it may be considered in the thick of the principal attractions. At least, in justice to ourselves, it is not possible to advance farther up the lake without making a stay of some sort on the shore of this superb bay. Man and nature have combined to turn it into one of the beauty-spots of earth. For the present the steamboat must set us down, for we refuse to go another mile until our immediate surroundings have been explored and satisfaction has been reached.

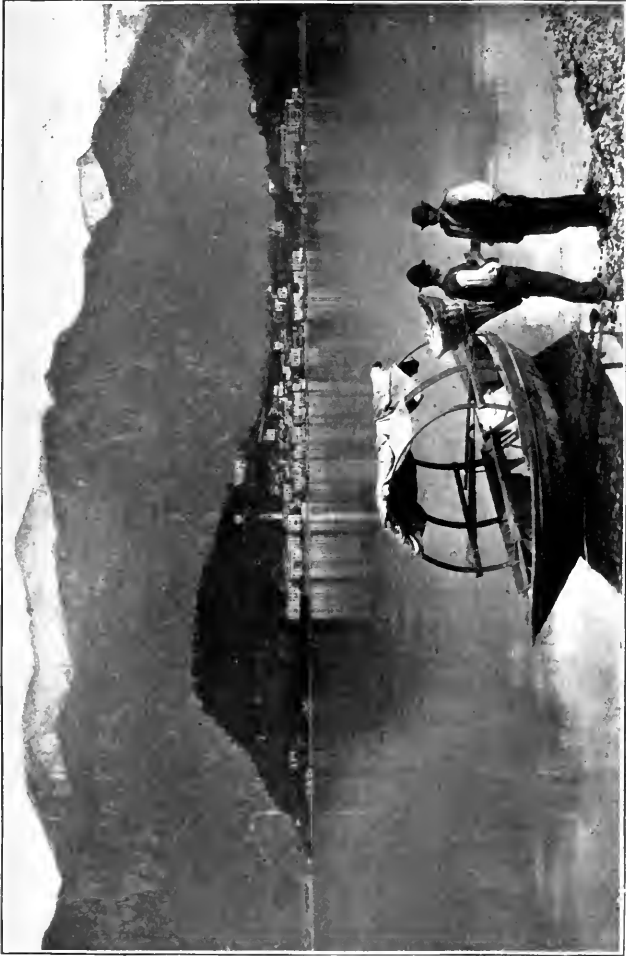
## CHAPTER XIX

THE BAY OF BELLAGIO: BELLAGIO, TREMEZZO,  
VILLA CARLOTTA, CADENABBIA AND MENAG-  
GIO, VARENNA

### *Bellagio*

THE picture of the promontory of Bellagio is so beautiful as a whole that the traveller had better stand off for awhile to admire it at a distance and at his leisure. Indeed it is a question whether the lasting impressions which we treasure of Bellagio are not, after all, those derived from across the lake, from the shore-fronts of Tremezzo, Cadenabbia, Menaggio, or Varenna.

A colossal, conquering geological lion appears to have come up from the south in times immemorial, bound for the north, and finding further progress stopped by the great sheet of water in front of him, seems to have halted and to be now crouching there with his noble head between his paws and his eyes fixed on the snow-covered Alps. The



BELLAGIO, ON LAKE COMO



## *Bellagio*

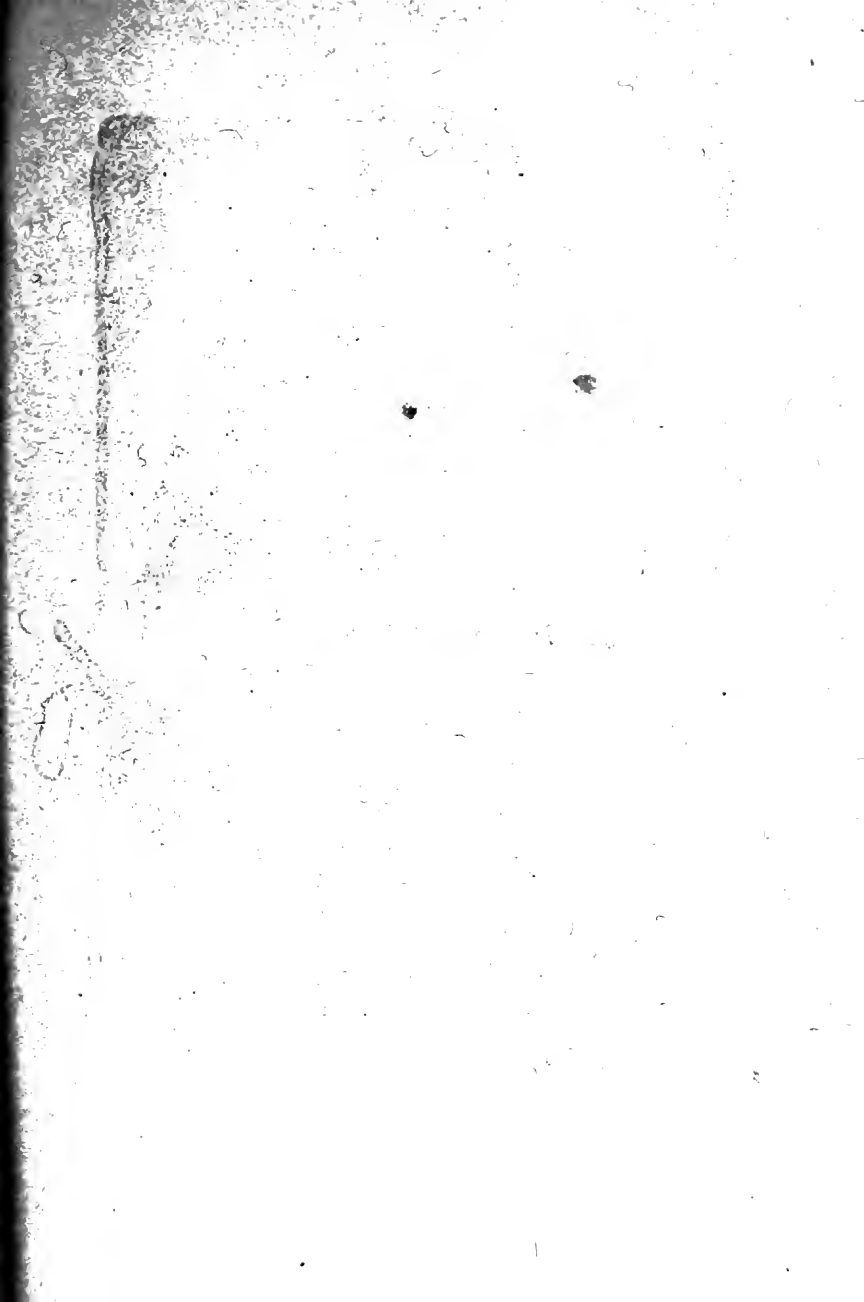
big white house on the lion's neck is the Villa Serbelloni, now used as the annex of a hotel, and the park of noble trees belonging to the villa forms the lion's mane. Hotels, both large and small, line the quay at the water's edge; then comes a break in the houses, and stately Villa Melzi is seen to stand off at one side. Villa Trotti gleams from among its bowers farther south, on the slope Villa Trivulzio, formerly Poldi, shows bravely, and Villa Giulia has cut for itself a wide prospect over both arms of the lake. At the back of this lion couchant, in the middle ground, sheer mountain walls tower protectingly, culminating in Monte Grigna.

The picture varies from hour to hour, from day to day, and from season to season. Its colour-scheme changes with wind and sun, its sparkle comes and goes from sunrise to sunset; only its form remains untouched through the night and lives to delight us another day. As the evening wears on, lights appear one by one on the quay of Bellagio, until there is a line of fire along the base of the dark peninsula. The hotel windows catch the glare, the villas light their storied corridors, and presently Bellagio, all aglow, presents the spectacle of a

## *The Italian Lakes*

Venetian night mirrored in the lake. By this time the mountains have turned black and the sky has faded. It grows so still on the water that the tinkle of a little Italian band reaches across the lake to Cadenabbia, a laugh rings out into the quiet air from one of the merry little rowboats, and even the slight clatter made by the fishermen, in putting their boats to rights for the night and in carrying their nets indoors, can be distinguished as one of many indications that the day is done.

When we land at Bellagio by daylight, we find it to be very much of a bazaar of souvenirs along the water-front, and everybody determined to carry away a keepsake. There is so much to buy: ornamental olive wood and tortoise-shell articles, Como blankets, lace, and what may be described in general terms as modern antiquities. These abound from shop to shop; even English groceries are available. Bellagio's principal street is suddenly converted at its northern end into a delightful arcade, after the arrangement which constitutes a characteristic charm of the villages and smaller towns on the Italian lakes; moreover, the vista up its side street is distinctly original. This



**A CHIANTI SELLER**

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Tadenabbia.  
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Chianti

B. M. Manus

1908

Italia



## *Bellagio*

mounts steeply from the waterside, like the streets of Algiers, is narrow and constructed in long steps to break the incline.

The headland of Bellagio would seem to have been marked by a fortress of some sort, even in Roman times. The villa of Pliny the Younger, which he called "Tragedy," is, as already stated, supposed to have stood somewhere on this tongue of land. In the fourteenth century there could be seen there a keep, used by a band of robbers who came from Val Cavargna, over by Menaggio, but it was destroyed by order of Gian Galeazzo Visconti. Then the Marquis Stanga built a mansion there, and after that had been torn down, a Duke Ercole Sfondrato built another in 1591, and this is the building, of course much altered to suit the tastes of successive owners, which passed into the hands of the Serbelloni family of Milan, and which now serves the peaceful purpose of a hotel annex.

Of Villa Serbelloni one may say that its pride lies in its park and in the rich diadem of views circling from that centre. It was a Duke Sfondrato who planted the headland with groves of trees and gave it that fanciful resemblance to the head and mane of a giant

## *The Italian Lakes*

lion when seen from the Tremezzina shore. There are five principal groups of trees with five special view-points, whence the eye can range at will over the two branches of the lake, or northward to the snow-clad Alps, or south upon the peninsula itself, rising in rich slopes and terraces, from garden to vineyard, from orchard to green fields and to forests of chestnut and walnut trees, where country-houses, farms, and hamlets present an appearance of fruitful ease.

In this famous park of Villa Serbelloni there is a lavish and luxuriant display of foliage in extraordinary variety, made accessible to the visitor by woodland paths. Here are dainty oleanders and giant cedars side by side, laurels, myrtles, palms, cacti, lemon, and even banana trees, amid sudden glimpses and glances over the unmatched splendour of lake and mountain. Take it all in all, there is surely no spot on earth better favoured than the Serbelloni park, nor is there a forest more redolent with the perfume of noble trees or resonant with the song of happier birds. Surely there is special provision here in the way of scenic beauty of a profuse and, withal, of an exalted type. Here as elsewhere in the region of the Ital-

## *Bellagio*

ian lakes the key-note of admiration is pitched for us by the startling contrast between the exotic and the arctic, by the simultaneous sight of sunlit waters and everlasting snows, by the olive-trees set off upon a background of distant mountain pines, by the sudden transition from the limpid notes of the nightingale, hidden in garden bowers, to the shrill cries of wild birds fresh from their eyries on the frowning crags of Monte Crocione, Cima di Pelaggia, or Monte Grigna.

Villa Melzi is significant as much for its architectural grandeur, and the artistic and historical treasures it contains, as for its beautiful grounds. There is an air of superb sumptuousness about Villa Melzi, which is enhanced by its costly marbles. The building with its two wings was erected in 1815 for Count, later Duke, Francesco Melzi d'Eril. There are copies of antiques made by Canova, and medallions by Thorwaldsen, also busts of Lætitia Bonaparte and Josephine Beauharnais by Canova; on the lakeside terraces a famous marble group of Dante and Beatrice by Comolli attracts attention.

And so sightseeing on this extraordinary tip of land multiplies apace. The hours

## *The Italian Lakes*

lengthen into days and easily gather into weeks, full of new delights. When the costly works of art in the villas and the delights of their gardens have satisfied the visitor, there are trips by water in every direction and excursions close at hand along unfrequented shores or into secluded heights. Perchance the way may lead as far as the unsophisticated villages of the Brianza.

Off the beaten track broad smiles and genial willingness on the part of the people make up for shortcomings in the way of board and lodging. The walk to Civenna, back of Bellagio, recalls in some of its aspects the road from Capri to Anacapri, as that develops its wider views with every zigzag, discloses a growing perspective of land and sea, and, finally, with a sweep of the hand presents us with the wealth of colour and multifarious outlines of the whole Bay of Naples. So there is something about this road that mounts from Bellagio to Civenna, which tempts to a comparison with the Capri road, for it shows the Bay of Bellagio lying below in a veritable superabundance of natural beauty.

At Bellagio it is interesting to read what Ruskin has to say on the subject of the villas

## *Bellagio*

on Lake Como. In "The Poetry of Architecture" he thus clearly characterizes their tendency as regards situation:

"The villas of the Lago di Como are built, *par préférence*, either on jutting promontories of low crag covered with olives, or on those parts of the shore where some mountain stream has carried out a bank of alluvium into the lake. One object proposed in this choice of situation is, to catch the breeze as it comes up the main opening of the hills, and to avoid the reflection of the sun's rays from the rocks of the actual shore; and another is, to obtain a prospect up or down the lake and of the hills on whose projection the villa is built: but the effect of this choice, when the building is considered the object, is to carry it exactly into the place where it ought to be, far from the steep precipice and dark mountain to the border of the winding bay and citron-scented cape, where it stands at once conspicuous and in peace."

Ruskin then cites Villa Serbelloni as an example of such a situation. As to the characteristic form of these villas, Ruskin writes:

"It is generally the apex of a series of

## *The Italian Lakes*

artificial terraces, which conduct through its gardens to the water. These are formal in their design, but extensive, wide, and majestic in their slope, the steps being generally about one-half foot high and four and one-half feet wide (sometimes, however, much deeper). They are generally supported by white wall, strengthened by unfilled arches, the angles being turned by sculptured pedestals, surmounted by statues or urns. Along the terraces are carried rows, sometimes of cypress, more frequently of orange or lemon trees, with myrtles, sweet bay, and aloes intermingled, but always with dark and spiry cypresses occurring in groups; and attached to these terraces, or to the villa itself, are series of arched grottoes, . . . built (or sometimes cut in the rock) for coolness, frequently overhanging the water, kept dark and fresh, and altogether delicious to the feelings."

As illustrative of this form of building, Ruskin cites Villa Sommariva (now Villa Carlotta). In "The Poetry of Architecture" Ruskin also describes the form of Villa Porro (now Villa Balbianello or Villa Arcomati).



## *Tremezzo*

### *Tremezzo*

Tremezzo is little more than a sunny archway with villas attached.

Take a handful of houses made of stone and mortar, tint them with the usual colour-scheme of an Italian lake-front, then dispose them in a line along and over the water, build out some little harbour jetties here and there, scoop out a few convenient hollows under the houses where little boats may lie, throw in bowers with trees trained to give shade, splash the house walls and parapets with wistaria vines and fill up all the unoccupied space with myrtle, rhododendron, and camellia bushes, — and you have Tremezzo seen from the water. And since the place must have some kind of a street, take a fair-sized auger and bore a passage through the first floors of all the houses, regardless of consequences, cut openings in the outside walls, so as to give an outlook upon the lake, and the result is a beautiful little archway, giving shelter from sun and rain and open on the waterside.

As the single street of Tremezzo is kept down to the dimensions of a bridle-path, and as there is a sign at the entrance of that

## *The Italian Lakes*

single street which warns the public that bicycles and *consimili* (such things) must be led by the hand through the archway, it is evident that official action has been taken in order that nothing obstreperous may intrude upon the idyllic quiet of the little place. No noisy auto, train, nor trolley, not even a carriage with prancing steeds may come that way; the narrowness of the path from Argegno protects Tremezzo on the south and Villa Carlotta stands guard on the north. The nearest approach to a vehicle the writer can recall was a strolling organ-grinder's cart, drawn by a donkey. Tranquillity reigns, a peaceful remoteness pervades the place, the atmosphere is sequestered and restful to a degree, yet even in its seclusion the archway of Tremezzo is next door to the big world, and is busy in its own cosy, homelike way. It has a provincial life of its own on a minute scale, only for most visitors Tremezzo is so sheltered and watched that it presents all the appearances of a private establishment or enterprise and gains thereby in their affections.

Of an evening it is a good plan to lean your elbows on some parapet of Tremezzo in order to see that the sun sets as it should.

## *Tremezzo*

Young girls go by, clinking their wooden clogs in the cobbled archway. A boat bell rings musically, and presently the paddles of an approaching steamboat beat a rapid tattoo on the water. Little wavelets lap the base of the parapet. Down at the dock the great excitement of the day is taking place with the arrival of the last mail and perchance also of guests for the hotel.

When this gentle turmoil has subsided, and the quality of the atmosphere is once more merely contemplative, a new note makes you turn your head toward the shrubberies of the villa gardens. It is a note you may never have heard before. If your home is overseas, it is quite unlikely that you have ever had the opportunity. The sound is of a quiet little warble, sweet and tentative. It is answered by another from the laurel bushes. There is a pause. Then comes a response from the myrtles. The warble lengthens into a mellow, fluty cadenza, soft and velvety and given with a gentle assurance. Soon the nightingales are busy singing to each other, to the mountains, to the silver trail of the moon on the lake, to all outdoors. At such times it is well to take a rowboat and creep noiselessly alongshore, listening

## *The Italian Lakes*

to the singing birds, past the noble water gate of Villa Carlotta, along the little shaded quay of Cadenabbia and its brightly lighted hotels toward Menaggio, skirting the walls, the lake steps, the jutting terraces, and the grand villas. Those placid nights full of balm will long be remembered even after the red camellias and the purple wistaria, which may have been pressed as souvenirs in your guide-books, have faded and grown yellow.

### *Villa Carlotta*

It is worth while to approach Villa Carlotta by rowboat, just to be able to land at its noble water-steps. At these steps the modern world must perforce drop away from our recollection, for the particular grace of their sweep belongs to an age which knew nothing about applied steam or electricity, but laid its lines for leisure. As our boat approaches the villa, its lakeside balustrades, enormous hedges, cacti and palms, are seen to be set off by a background of severe and Oriental aspect, the bare strata of Monte Crocione.

Perhaps, when you land, an old man, as in years gone by, may still be sitting by the

## *Villa Carlotta*

steps carving wooden spoons so dexterously and patiently. Once in awhile he used to take his siesta on the parapet in the genial sun, and once in a great while he would sell a spoon.

The villa exterior is simplicity itself. The building looks more like the country-house common to the continent of Europe than like a show-place palazzo. There is a big central clock and homelike green blinds. Once past the great ornamental ironwork gateway, however, and within the vestibule of Villa Carlotta, it becomes evident that we have entered no ordinary country-house, but a choice repository of art, full of historical association. Here Canova and Thorwaldsen have left some of their distinctive work. Especially famous is Canova's sculpture, entitled "Cupid and Psyche," which stands in the marble hall, and is a work of art known and shown the world over in a multitude of plastic reproductions or photographs. Youthful charm and innocence mark this piece of sculpture and make it a sort of a modern classic, universally liked. The walls of the marble hall are covered with Thorwaldsen's reliefs, entitled "Triumph of Alexander," running as a frieze and depicting the con-

## *The Italian Lakes*

queror's entry into fallen Babylon. This work was originally ordered of the sculptor in plaster, to be placed in the Quirinal in Rome on the occasion of the visit of Napoleon I. Later on the emperor commissioned Thorwaldsen to execute the work in marble, but the fall of Napoleon I. put a temporary stop to the sculptor's plans. Finally the latter sold the whole series to Count Sommariva, who acquired the villa in 1802 and housed these marble treasures within its walls. In 1843 a princess of Prussia bought the villa and named it after her daughter Carlotta. Through this daughter the villa came by inheritance into the possession of the ducal family of Saxe-Meiningen, the present owners. If you are very fortunate, some day, when you are walking on the shaded quay which binds the villa to Cadenabbia, you may even be in time to see the grand ducal barge with its liveried oarsmen and handsomely polished appurtenances wait at the famous water-steps, and presently you may witness the ducal party issue from the iron gateway, enter the big boat, and then glide over the water as the barge is propelled by a beautiful sweep of the oars. The oarsmen wear green sashes and what look like



THE DUCAL BARGE OF SAXE - MEININGEN





## *Villa Carlotta*

tam-o'shanters, and a green and white flag floats from the stern.

The garden of the villa virtually fills in the space between Tremezzo and Cadenabbia and rises in four great terraces from the water up the slope. Giant magnolias and myrtles are shown by the attendant, also a trellised walk of lemon-trees, and exotics of every variety fill the air with pleasant perfumes and provide deep, shadowy, silent nooks whence the sparkling lake looks doubly brilliant.

There is no doubt that the nightingales have chosen this glorious garden for one of their chief abiding-places in their search for seclusion. Hidden under the canopy of the thick foliage, they warble undisturbed morning and night, paying the compliments of the hour to dawn and dusk, and singing sweet sayings to each other. Their voices spread a harmless flattery over the entire lakeside and tend to multiply every grace of bird and flower, man and beast. Surely the very fish, floating balanced under the hollows of the lake shore, must hear and rejoice.

## *The Italian Lakes*

### *Cadenabbia and Menaggio*

The English have colonized the waterfront of Cadenabbia, and there is very little else to the place. English seems to be the prevalent language on the quay, and is spoken at a pinch even by some of the bold, brave *battellieri*, who wear fancy sailor suits and look like man-o'-war's-men fresh from the stage. Their straw hats have ribbons decorated with the names of the hotels they serve, and some go so far as to wear gay and gaudy red sashes.

Among Longfellow's "Poems," in the division headed "Birds of Passage," are some delightful verses called "Lake of Como." These same verses also appear in a series of volumes, edited by Longfellow and entitled "Poems of Places." In that series the verses are called "Cadenabbia." The MS. poem written by Longfellow himself hangs in the Hotel Belle Vue in Cadenabbia. The following are some of its lines:

“No sound of wheels or hoof-beat breaks  
The silence of the summer day,  
As by the loveliest of all lakes  
I while the idle hours away.

. . . . .

## *Cadenabbia and Menaggio*

“ By Somariva’s garden gate  
I make the marble stairs my seat,  
And hear the water, as I wait,  
Lapping the stones beneath my feet.”

Other verses refer to:

“ Bellagio blazing in the sun ”

and

“ Varenna with its white cascade.”

These verses have doubtless done something to popularize Cadenabbia among English-speaking peoples, for the place now shares with Bellagio the affections and attentions of the majority of such tourists.

Beyond Cadenabbia a carriage road skirts the lake to Menaggio, and a series of magnificent villas range themselves along it for the view over lake and mountain. It has been reserved for the owner of one of the finest of these villas to strike a highly successful note in making his castellated dwelling seem really to spring from the very ground. The colouring has been chosen to match the noble rocks of San Martino at the back, as well as the gray-green tint of the gentle olive-trees that soften the straight lines of the terraces.

## *The Italian Lakes*

The pretty village of Griante smiles from its vineyards upon the slope above; the bare sides of Monte San Martino invite a climb for the superb view over the three branches of the lake. A depression in the rock near the white church of San Martino is, according to the peasants, the very place where Noah's ark rested after the flood. It is interesting to know that shells and various marine deposits have been found in the rock at that altitude, as though to confirm current tradition about the ark.

From somewhere along the road between Cadenabbia and Menaggio, though nearer the latter place, there may be seen a well-defined profile upon the mountains of the opposite shore of Lake Lecco toward the southeast. It is called the face of Napoleon, although it bears no particular resemblance to that well-known physiognomy. The head appears to lie back, there is a chin, a nose, a slight depression for the eye, and a sloping forehead. There is also a queer downward line which makes this "old man o' the mountain" look decidedly *grumpy*.

Menaggio, in contrast with Cadenabbia and Bellagio, presents the appearance of being more than a mere traveller's home. It

## *Cadenabbia and Menaggio*

has a large silk factory and maintains two boat-landings, one to connect with the steam-tram that ascends over the mountains to Porlezza on Lake Lugano, and the other boat-landing for the northern end of the town. Of the trip to Porlezza, it may be stated that for those who have not the time to learn in detail of the charms of the Bay of Bellagio, this ascent by steam-tram gives them a superb bird's-eye view. As the tiny train moves up, it is as though a shifting of colossal scenery was going on, — the fore, the middle, and the backgrounds acting and reacting upon each other, bringing out views of changing contrasts and startling combinations, wherein the villas of the rich and the hamlets of the poor occupy the same stage. We mount through fig-trees and cypresses to forests of chestnut close to the sullen rocks above, while the lake lies below placid in its widest expanse of delicious blue. A sail barge lies becalmed upon it, or a steamboat makes a wide mark over its surface. Then presently the train dips down over the crest of the pass toward Lake Lugano.

The only landward connection between Menaggio and Aquaseria used to be by a

## *The Italian Lakes*

bridle-path similar to the one from Argegno to Tremezzo, only bolder in its peregrinations. It went meandering and romancing up and down the rocky mountainside, around the Sasso Rancio, or orange rock, in a most irresponsible way, and gave the French much trouble when they found themselves obliged to use it in 1799. Indeed they used it to their cost, for at the orange rock many a horse and rider plunged into the lake below. To-day the usefulness of this path is replaced by a grand new carriage road, such as the Italians know so well how to build, the *Strada Regina Margherita*, with the usual assortment of tunnels and cuts. No one should complain of the change, for the old path was really exasperating at times in its splendid audacity, and some of the corners had very sheer edges dipping down to the compact blue of the lake beneath. And yet the lizards used to bask very comfortably on the protecting wall of the old path, the cherry-trees ripened especially early there under the influence of the heat reflected from the rocks, the laburnum clusters were profusely yellow, and in the branches the nightingales sang pretty much all day to the glimmering waters below, undisturbed by

## *Varenna*

the rare wayfarers or by harmless little donkeys carrying burdens from village to village.

## *Varenna*

Completing the garland of fair places on the Bay of Bellagio, but situated on the eastern shore of the lake, lies Varenna, unique and Oriental of aspect, with dark cypresses matched against a pale gray cliff. Not long since the place was but a primitive lake hamlet, but the railroad from Lecco to Colico has necessitated a station, and there is quite a fine steamboat landing, with a hotel omnibus in waiting to take guests up the incline. The ruined tower surmounting the great cliff of Vezio, high above the town, was once a fortress belonging to that same family of Sfondrato, to which reference was made under the heading of Bellagio, and a member of which established himself where Villa Serbelloni now stands.

Varenna, facing south, lies in the full track of the rays of the sun, as they search the mountainsides, and are reflected from the surface of the lake at its widest expanse. The view is down two of the arms of the lake and up the third. Lizards find Varenna

## *The Italian Lakes*

especially attractive, and scurry among the cactus plants, the oleanders, the orange and citron trees.

Near Varenna the picturesquely named torrent of Fiume Latte (Stream of Milk) falls into the lake in a series of cascades from a height of almost one thousand feet. During the winter months it generally disappears entirely, shows itself occasionally after rain-storms in summer, and is most copious in spring with the melting of the snow and ice in the heights above.

If the call of the mountains makes itself heard, a trip up the Val d'Esino to Monte Grigna is in order from Varenna. This will take us away from the floating population of the lakeside, which has come from the ends of the earth to delight in the shifting spectacle of Lake Como, and will lead us to where the great white clouds trail over the solitary upland pastures. There a few herders live remotely, yet they need but look over the brinks of their lofty precipices to see, set out below, picture-maps of close cultivation and close habitation, of wealth and fashion, of a strange mode of living, with which they are brought into actual contact only through the milk and butter they sell.



## *Varenna*

And doubtless, when the cattle have been milked for the day and the spare bite of polenta has been taken, they can sit for a while in the twilight, watching certain curious jets of piercing white light dart from the obscurity of Cadenabbia and Menaggio and cast corresponding reflections upon the water. These jets are electric lights, and they stand for the very acme of luxurious lowland extravagance in the eyes of the good people of the mountains.

## CHAPTER XX

### FROM CHIAVENNA TO LECCO

TRAVELLERS from the Engadine over the Maloja and Splügen passes find at Chiavenna their first town of any size in Italy. It is, as its name implies, a "Key" to Northern Italy, the Clavenna of the Romans. First impressions count for a great deal, and Chiavenna is nothing if not original. The town is dominated by a rock, a veritable citadel in appearance, which is, however, devoted to the peaceful purpose of a restaurant, called Paradiso. The unfinished structure of a great castle with staring windows lies at the foot of this rock. Chiavenna can tell tales of siege and strain and destruction, from the time of Barbarossa to the Visconti, and in more modern times bears witness to the conflicting ambitions of the Swiss Canton of Graubünden, of Spain, France, and Austria. The castle was begun by the De Salis family of Graubünden, but abandoned in 1639.

## *From Chiavenna to Lecco*

A lofty Lombard campanile rises from the town, but both that and the citadel-like rock are dwarfed by the towering heights that seem to have caught and clamped Chiavenna between their sheer steeply wooded sides. Little terraces of bright green, miniature trellises, vineyards, and white houses, pitched against forests of swelling chestnut-trees,— all these cling to the mountains like flies to window-panes.

The interior of the town is largely characterized by the rushing stream of the Mera, along which the town is built. Many of the back doors give upon the tumultuous water. Two fine bridges cross the Mera, one leading to the Maloja pass and the other to the Splügen. A few old portals catch the eye as reminders of good old days. The place is not without modern features, being lighted by electricity and connected with the great world by rail, but it gives an impression of being constantly engaged in a struggle against its alpine background and winning a right to existence only by incessant toil. There is some resemblance to Sion and Belinzone in Switzerland. At Chiavenna, also, the big yellow diligences of Switzerland, and their drivers and guards in modest uni-

## *The Italian Lakes*

form, make connections with the voluble Italian trains and hobnob with the Italian customs officers and Italian *carabinieri* in brave array.

The journey from Chiavenna to Colico on Lake Como takes us first of all through a strange flat country which goes by the name of the Piano di Chiavenna. Here cattle and horses range over the wide meadows. Then comes Lake Riva with reedy shores and sombre gorges opening into the mountainsides, and shortly before Colico a glimpse is afforded of the entrance into the highly cultivated Val Tellina (German Veltlin), into which a branch line runs to the places Sondrio and Tirano.

Around Colico the mountains are plentifully sprinkled with villages. Here the question of rail or steamboat must be decided for the further journey, only let no travellers who have merely taken the train from Colico to Lecco imagine that they have seen the Lake of Como. Never was there a more aggravating line with such provoking frequency of tunnels. At the moment of enjoyment, when the eye, after much dodging of projections, trees, houses, or mountain spurs, has finally caught a glimpse of the match-

## *From Chiavenna to Lecco*

less blue expanse, then comes with sudden fury an obliterating blackness and a mighty rumbling. The train has plunged once more into the mountainside. The peeps are fascinating, but the waits are exasperating, and this alternation of "now you do" and "now you don't" has been known to make travellers refuse to look even when there was really something to see.

In the year 1833 Ruskin, then some fourteen years of age, made his first trip over the Alps with his parents. He wrote "A Tour on the Continent" in juvenile verses, and among sub-headings of this poem we find "Chiavenna," "Lago di Como," "Cadenabbia," "Villa Pliniana," and "Lago Maggiore." In his "Præterita" he thus writes of his initiation into the beauties of Lake Como:

"We took boat on the little recessed lake of Chiavenna, and rowed down the whole way of waters, passing another Sunday at Cadenabbia, and then, from villa to villa, across the lake, and across to Como, and so to Milan by Monza. It was then full, though early, summer-time; and the first impression of Italy always ought to be in summer. It was also well that, though my

## *The Italian Lakes*

heart was with the Swiss cottage, the artificial taste in me had been mainly formed by Turner's rendering of these very scenes in Rogers's 'Italy.' ”

The upper portion of Lake Como is not as thickly sown with travellers as the lower portion. There is less of the spectacular, less affluence and abundance of vegetation. The olive-tree gives place readily to the chestnut, and yet a place like Gravedona is not without interest. It displays a fine old palazzo, with a terrace overlooking the lake and a graceful central loggia. Many a pink house or a blue one stands out from rock or wooded pinnacle, and everywhere there is a painstaking cultivation of every scrap of ground available. The clouds, too, perform their part when the day is not absolutely sunny, as needs must be sometimes, even on the Italian lakes. In long level streaks they hang along the mountains, often leaving the peaks exposed to view. Then, when the sun does break through, these same clouds glow and cast their halos on the land beneath.

Dongo is a large-ish place, and the ruins of castle Musso recorded history in their day, when they sheltered that extraordinary pirate, the self-styled Giov. Giac. de Medici.

## *The Lake of Lecco*

For the historical significance of this adventurer, the reader is referred to the author's work on "The Rise of the Swiss Republic."

Somebody has softened the ruins of Musso by turning the whole of the rocky height into a garden. Here are rockeries and little paths artistically and artificially traced from point to point over yawning chasms by pretty bridges. At every possible place, by every torrent that tumbles into the lake, and on every sloping bit of shore the invariable washerwomen kneel to their work. Here and there, in bight or bay, fishermen are seen drawing in their nets, and fish-hawks sail in circles on the alert.

Bellano, with its large factories, is at the entrance of the Val Sassina and opens the way to interesting excursions into rarely visited mountains, from which it is possible to emerge again at the town of Lecco.

## *The Lake of Lecco*

A double line of rail and carriage road rather spoils the looks of the eastern bank of the Lake of Lecco, but this line renders a vast service to the country and should not be condemned for scratching the mountain-

## *The Italian Lakes*

side. At best the mountains hereabouts are somewhat severe in their bareness, but their forms are imposing, and the lake renders them again in majestic reflections. Noticeable are certain pathetic brown stacks of brushwood, assembled with scrupulous care on the shore-line at the feet of the hard cliffs and speaking eloquently of a constant struggle against poverty. As we step aboard the steamboat for Lecco, we are handed yellow tickets bearing the name of the station where we embark. This seems to be a habit peculiar to Lake Como. The day is warm and hazy, and a uniformity which is almost colourless broods upon the water. Great barges, with big oars acting as side boards, drop quietly astern, becalmed. On the second-class deck some recruits, summoned to the colours, sing to keep up their courage. They repeat some simple musical phrase with surprising persistence and end it finally in a long-drawn, dirge-like chant.

And since the subject of mountain silhouettes has been broached before in this book, in connection with the Lake of Lecco, it may be in order for the writer to state that, returning from Lecco to Bellagio by boat one evening he saw a silhouette designed upon



## *Lecco*

the flanks of a mountain, probably the Corni di Canzo, which far transcended anything of its kind he had ever seen, in clearness of outline and especially in beauty. It was about sundown, and the point of view was toward Lecco. The silhouette was that of a pure Greek head with the unmistakable type of features, — straight nose, fine lips, and delicately chiseled chin. The head was surmounted by a helmet of antique pattern. As the boat receded and the sun sank, there was a gradual lengthening out of the silhouette until it vanished, but during its best moments the design was worthy of a Canova or a Thorwaldsen. It was as though one of these great modern rejuvenators of the classic antique had climbed into the heights and blocked out there upon that topmost slope, with Herculean stencil, a giant head that should epitomize admiration for the noble lines and the perennial art of ancient Greece.

## *Lecco*

After one has seen the notable beauty spots of Lake Como, — such as Bellagio and the Tremezzina, — the Bay of Lecco is perhaps not particularly impressive, nor the

## *The Italian Lakes*

town especially pleasing. By contrast with those show-places, Lecco, the town, looks distinctly industrial. Indeed it is a very active centre of trade and traffic by reason of silk, cotton, and iron-ware factories and by means of its periodical markets. Every Saturday, for instance, during the silk-cocoon season there is a market at Lecco devoted to this staple product of the country. It acts as a sort of exchange for much of the Brianza, and along with the silk cocoons many of the silver hair needles and wooden slippers of the women of Lake Como find their way to Lecco.

The water-front of Lecco is not decidedly picturesque, nor is there much of that colour which redeems so much disorder in Italy. At the same time the toothed mountain at the back, the Resegnone, is striking, and there is a pretty little village on the opposite shore called Malgrate.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE DILIGENCE

AT Chiavenna and thereabouts the presence of the diligence still confronts the traveller with its particular memories of leisurely travel.

The railroad is fast crowding the good old stage-coach off most of the lines of travel in the Alps. It has long since done so in the plains. We are witnessing the slow extinction of a peculiar method of transportation, the few reminders of which will presently find themselves among the curiosities of the lumber-room, or will be catalogued in museums under the head of the history of travel, and labelled in a list beginning with the ox-cart and ending with the flying machine. The diligence is daily growing to be more and more of a memory. In some parts of the Alps it already belongs to the good old times. Therefore its reminiscence should be promptly chronicled.

## *The Italian Lakes*

There are railroad plans and counter-plans for tunnelling, spanning, circling, overcoming, and generally circumventing the Alps. New inventions and novel appliances are being brought to bear on the transit problem, making startling promises and raising grand hopes. Especially is little Switzerland busy in this attack upon the integrity of the Alps. After making its own valleys and peaks accessible to the tourist world, it has drawn its big neighbours into connivance to destroy the aloofness of the great European backbone and lower its pride. Two historic tunnels already connect the progressive little republic with Italy and the Italian lakes, namely, those of the St. Gothard and the Simplon. France has its Mont Cenis on the west and Austria its Brenner on the east, both placing the traveller within short distances of the lakes. Other connections must follow in due time, every fresh enterprise of this sort displacing some old-established line of diligences and relegating these vehicles to a past which is not without its cherished and particular adventures.

Therefore, without permitting ourselves to disparage in the least the virtues of train and steam or electric traffic, virtues which

## *The Diligence*

are many and welcome, let fancy range for awhile over the achievements and merits of the diligence as a means of travel.

It would seem that the children have been the ones to appreciate the merits of the diligence even more than their elders. They have had no sense of responsibility for engaging places, for seeing the baggage on, for making sure of rooms at the end of the journey; they have felt no pressure to arrive on time, or to make connections anywhere with anything. They have been care-free, tuned to enjoy the exhilarating sense of being on the go, in a large-sized carriage, from which they have actually been allowed to get out and walk up-hill. The elders might complain of the dust or expostulate against the scorching sun, but nothing could destroy for the children that delightfully adventurous sensation of going on and on into the great world, not knowing whither and not needing to know.

The pace of the diligence may be slow, but it moves to its destination from valley to slope, from zigzag to pass, up hill and down dale in such a way as to let the country be seen. The telegraph-poles do not fly past, but succeed each other without losing a deco-

## *The Italian Lakes*

rous identity. It is possible to sight a favourite flower or bird on the edge of the forest, to catch a smile or return a greeting from a wayside cottage, to see the haymakers in the field and the women drawing water at the village fountain.

The equipment and accoutrements of diligence travel vary in the different portions of the Alps, from Savoy through Switzerland to Tyrol and Styria, but resemblances are many. The coaches are invariably yellow. On the great Swiss diligences there is a glass-covered box in front and a hooded lookout up behind. During the height of the tourist season diligence travel pretty much everywhere means getting up at dawn and manœuvring in the half-light so as not to be forced to ride inside the diligence itself. This seems paradoxical. The explanation is that all, except those who have secured outside seats, want to ride in one of the nice open extra carriages, which are generally found necessary during the season. Hence there is much hanging back, quite unaccountable to the novice, but perfectly clear to the tourist who has ever ridden all day inside the diligence. Time-inured and season-hardened tourists aver that there is a way

## *The Diligence*

of being too late for the inside of the diligence and just in time for a seat in the extra carriage, — but there are risks.

Now let us indulge in a supposed trip by diligence, which shall be thoroughly reminiscent, and yet not commit us to any particular starting-place or point of arrival. The seats having been apportioned, the four or five horses can now be led out from the stables. Their hoofs are blackened, the strings of bells around their necks jingle interestingly, and the stable-boy with the tasselled cap helps the driver hitch them up. It cannot be said that they look particularly gay or festive. They do not champ impatiently to be off, like the steeds in historical romances, but they seem willing; they can be made to see their duty and to do it. As the journey progresses, we learn to appreciate their kindly demeanour even under trying circumstances, and at the various halting-places we strike up a speaking acquaintance with the fat one whose legs are white and the bay mare that cocks one ear.

We are off! The cool morning air soon removes all traces of heated arguments about seats. An astonishing alpine freshness pervades the whole landscape. A slow-moving

## *The Italian Lakes*

panorama of pictures unfolds itself and continues throughout the trip. The sun rises, and odours of mown fields, of thyme and heather, of larch and pine, issue from the side valleys. Toward noon the diligence reaches the outskirts of a village larger than the rest. The horses swing with a will into its single narrow cobbled street, their hoofs reëcho loudly and their bells strike an imperative note. The driver cracks his enormous whip with professional dexterity, as the great yellow coach curves into the village square, where stand the post-office and the posting-inn. Another stable-boy with tasselled cap rushes forward with buckets of water. There is a noise like that of many pumps, as the horses get their noses into the buckets. Then the stable-boy pulls some troughs from under the eaves of the inn and feeds the horses with oats and bran. There is some pushing and shoving, to see who shall be first, and we are led to remonstrate mildly with the fat one whose legs are white for trying to crowd out the bay mare that cocks one ear. The horse-flies, too, annoy our good steeds. In alpine regions these flies seem to make up in size and industry for the shortness of the summer.



## *The Diligence*

Under the full sunshine the diligence rolls out into the open country once more. Now we pass a grand hotel, where considerable fashion is displayed at little tables, in the doorway and upon a well-placed terrace. Again we find ourselves plunging into a dark tunnel. The people in the extra carriage hold up shawls to keep off the drippings from the vaulted ceiling. Those inside the diligence make note of this, and for the first and only time congratulate themselves on their sheltered seats. On the other side of the tunnel we mount a last series of zigzags and so reach the summit of the pass. Then the driver descends from the box, crawls under the coach, and presently there is a mysterious rattle of chains. The diligence has put on its shoe and proceeds down-hill at a comfortable trot, without danger of overspeeding. So the day passes, and, with the evening air drawing down from the heights in alternate currents of warm and cold, the end of the journey is in sight. Perhaps it is some town-like village of the Upper Rhine Valley or of the Engadine, or some high-placed summer resort of Tyrol, or some white-walled, sun-baked Italian frontier post. Whenever and whatever the

## *The Italian Lakes*

objective point, there will surely be supper and an early bed for the children, and for the horses, besides their oats and bran, there is likely to be a portion of the rough black bread of the country as an extra titbit.

Years after, the children, grown to men and women, will remember with undiminished enthusiasm the bright skies and woolly-white clouds of that day on the stage-coach, the sudden corners opening up vistas of towering snow peaks, the gray torrents fresh from the mouths of glaciers, the stretches of sombre pine forests, the wide extent of velvet slopes, the deep blue lakes, the patient, kindly peasants, and the flashing beauties of emerald, sapphire, and of scintillating opal along this typical diligence ride.

## CHAPTER XXII

### TWO SUBALPINE SCHOLARS: ALESSANDRO MANZONI AND ANTONIO STOPPANI

IF you look into the window of an Italian bookstore, there are two works which you will almost surely see there among the many exposed for sale. One is the famous historical romance, "I Promessi Sposi," of Alessandro Manzoni; and the other is a description of Italy, entitled "Il Bel Paese," by Antonio Stoppani. These writers both gave new impulses to young Italy, reflected its peculiar sentiments, its colour, and its glories, and thus made their way into the hearts of their countrymen, to find hospitable lodgment there.

They come within the covers of this book because they were both connected with the same part of the Italian lakes region, — with Lecco. They were in truth subalpine men. Manzoni was born in Milan, of a family long settled near Lecco; and there, also, he

## *The Italian Lakes*

placed the scene of his famous romance. And Stoppani, also, lived at Lecco, the geology of whose surroundings he made the starting-point for world-wide researches.

### *Alessandro Manzoni (1785 - 1873)*

It seems strange, perhaps, that a literary figure like that of Manzoni should have become the presiding genius of so prosaic and commercial a town as Lecco is to appearance. He it is who has made Lecco a familiar name throughout Italy, and placed it on the lips of many people who have never heard of the silk and iron industries of the place. In the evening, when the population, Latin-fashion, pours out into the main street to talk and walk, the lamps on the four corners of Manzoni's monument in the square are lighted, and make of his statue a literary shrine for the strollers to admire.

In truth, Italians study his "I Promessi Sposi" almost as diligently as they do their Dante and "Divina Commedia." The famous book occupies almost the same position in Italian literature that "Don Quixote" holds in Spanish. The first edition is dated 1821; but since then there have been no less than

## *Alessandro Manzoni*

118 editions in Italian, nineteen in French, seventeen in German, and ten in English.

It must be acknowledged that Manzoni's opportunity for fame was unusual. In other countries the romantic literary renaissance of the early nineteenth century brought many men of genius to the front; but in Italy Manzoni seems to have had the field very much to himself. Hence his position may be termed unique, which is not saying that he does not deserve the admiration so generously showered upon him. For the sake of those who have never read "I Promessi Sposi," or have forgotten the story, one may be permitted to remind them that the book tells the tale of two young people, Renzo and Lucia, who in the year 1628 and thereafter pass through many tribulations before they can be married and remain happy ever after. Lucia is abducted. Renzo, on his part, goes through thrilling adventures; but the faithful lovers are finally brought together again in Milan, at the time of the plague, through the instrumentality of a priest, Christopher.

Manzoni used his historic material cleverly in this simple story, so as to make it appeal at once to the individual and to the

## *The Italian Lakes*

nation. In a letter to his closest friend, Claude Charles Fauriel, the French scholar, in 1821, Manzoni thus gave his idea of historical novels as a form of literature: "I may tell you that I conceive of them as a representation of a given state of society by means of facts and characters so nearly resembling reality that one could believe it a true story which one had just discovered."

The Manzoni family were originally feudal lords from Sarzio in the Val Sassina, near Lecco. The writer's father, Don Pietro Antonio Manzoni, moved down, in 1710, to a villa called Calcotto, built by the grandfather, Don Alessandro. On this villa a marble tablet now records the fact that Manzoni was not only the author of "I Promessi Sposi," but also of the "Inni" and the "Adelchi." The "Inni" is a collection of lyrics, partly sacred and partly secular, among which that one inspired by the death of Napoleon I., "Il Cinque Maggio," is said to be the most popular lyric in the language. The "Adelchi" is a tragedy dealing with the conquest of Lombardy by Charlemagne, but containing many veiled allusions to the modern Austrian rule of Manzoni's day.

## *Antonio Stoppani*

At school Manzoni was reckoned among the unpromising scholars, until, at the age of fifteen, he broke forth into poetry with some sonnets of great promise. He accompanied his mother to France and lived with her there in Auteuil, near Paris. Later he returned to Milan and resided at Via Morone No. 1, spending his summers at Brusuglio, three miles out of Milan. Among his closer friends was also Antonio Rosmini-Serbati, the founder of the order of Rosminians. Manzoni lived to the advanced age of eighty-eight. His funeral, in 1873, was one of the most sumptuous Italy has witnessed in recent times, and has become memorable in the annals of art because Verdi wrote a requiem for it, which has since become famous as one of the greatest examples of that particular musical form.

### *Antonio Stoppani (1824 - 91)*

When we come to Stoppani, we find ourselves considering a scholar and teacher whose personal appearance is still remembered by many. It is said to have been much like that of Renan. He was born in Lecco, and early learned to know its surroundings with singular accuracy.

## *The Italian Lakes*

He was a geologist by instinct from boyhood, a natural collector of stones and shells, an observer from whom nothing pertinent to his special interest escaped. He was passionately fond of his Lecco. Even after extensive travels, he always returned to it with renewed admiration. On the lake, up the narrowing valleys, on the mountain-tops, he was ever the ardent naturalist; and with that, too, the poet and patriot. He early arrived at geological conclusions, the importance of which he did not suspect until a savant was sent down from Vienna to prepare a treatise on the geology of Lombardy, and found that Stoppani had already done the work in the rough. Stoppani's researches were published soon after, under the title of "*Studii Geologici e Paleontologici sulla Lombardia.*" With this he at once stepped into the front rank of the world's naturalists.

Not until he had carefully studied his native district, idealized it, and philosophized about it, did he turn farther afield, over the beautiful peninsula of his greater country, Italy itself. In 1875 appeared his "*Il Bel Paese,*" the most popular of his books, — a book which revealed to many



## *Antonio Stoppani*

Italians the many-sided beauties of their own soil, — from the ice, snow, and waterfalls of the Alps to the ineffable blue of sea and sky in lower Italy. As an example of a monograph on a subject in natural science, treated in a popular style, Stoppani's "What Is a Volcano?" deserves to be taken as a model. It was as teacher, as educator in various schools and universities, and as public lecturer that Stoppani left his mark upon the new Italy of to-day.

In Pavia, in Florence, as head of the great Ambrosian Library in Milan, he helped to make the Italians conscious of their own possibilities, and taught them to treasure the past, and to prepare for the future. It was one thing to give Italy the appearance of a political unit. It was quite another matter to make it truly united. Stoppani realized this, as did Manzoni. He would have preferred a confederation first, to lead up to a centralized state by degrees. But the fact of political union being accomplished, the next best thing was to raise the morale of the whole people by every possible means, and this Stoppani laboured long and enthusiastically to accomplish.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### BERGAMO

THE portion of Bergamo known as the *città*, or ancient city, is a marvel of feudalism. It crowns a hill surrounded by monster bastions and parapets, now happily turned into pleasant walks shaded by great affluent horse-chestnut-trees. As one approaches from the Lombard plain, the *città* looks pre-eminently "fit for treason, stratagems, and spoils," although, Shakespeare assures us, that is exactly the condition of "the man that hath no music in himself," and yet Bergamo is noted as the birthplace of Donizetti and of lesser musical celebrities, such as Rubini.

Fig-trees and mulberry-trees in abundance climb up the fertile green slopes to the ramparts. The houses stand in serried ranks, tinted in the shades of colour which the Italians love, yellow, pink, and blue; while the uniformity of the walls is broken by tiny loggias. Four great gateways give ac-

## *Bergamo*

cess to the *città*. Up on top of the sheer bulwarks it is so quiet one can hear the distant talk of men working in the hill-side vineyards. A clock is striking, and off from the distance the blare of trumpets arrives mellowed and softened. Then, suddenly, the sound of some one practising scales on the piano tinkles and trickles from an open window, and suggests the musical interest which attaches to Bergamo.

The country northward, and in a measure eastward and westward also, breaks out into hillocks and rolling mounds, the final spurs which the Alps project into the vast, hazy Italian plain. On these fore-hills are fascinating bits for the colourist in farm, villa, and castle. At Bergamo the traveller is standing on the very fringe of the great mountain chain, treading on the tail of its coat.

The city is not on the direct line from Milan to Venice, like its neighbour and mediæval rival Brescia, and so needs to be sought out for itself. From Lecco the distance is only about twenty miles, and from Brescia a little over thirty.

From 1428 to 1797 Bergamo belonged to the Republic of Venice. Its annual fair of

## *The Italian Lakes*

one month, from the middle of August to the middle of September, is said to have been held uninterruptedly since the tenth century. To-day this fair, like the majority of fairs elsewhere, has largely lost its commercial importance, yet a portion of the city lying in the plain is still set apart for its booths. To be accurate, Bergamo has long since overrun the crest of its crown, and has spread around itself a number of low-lying suburbs, or *borghi*. The main *città* on the height is 1,245 feet above the level of the sea, and there the Bergamesque families of ancient lineage were wont to dwell, who left the plain to traders and artificers, — and to the fair. In our day Bergamo is still one of the prominent provincial centres of Northern Italy, with considerable industrial activity, especially in silk.

A wide modern street, the *Strada Vittorio Emanuele*, leads from the railroad station in the plain, past the fair grounds, to the foot of the old city. The hill is climbed by a gentle carriage road or by steep foot-paths. The traveller, entering at one of the gates of the *città*, finds himself at once treading the wonderful terraced boulevards and promenades of ancient Bergamo mentioned above.

## *Bergamo*

In the centre of the *città*, almost hidden from view, lies the quaint municipal centre, now called Piazza Garibaldi, surrounded by buildings characteristic of local history. Here the Palazzo Vecchio, Broletto or town hall, stands on its columns, leaving an open hall beneath; we notice a projecting balcony (*Ringhiera*), recalling the days of the popular assembly; farther there is the unfinished Palazzo Nuovo; the statue of Torquato Tasso, whose father was a native of Bergamo, and a statue of Garibaldi. Near by is the cathedral and the Church of S. Maria Maggiore with adjoining Capella Colleoni. The latter was built by that *condottiere*, or free lance, Bartolommeo Colleoni, who was one of the most successful leaders of the mercenary companies which fought now on this side, now on that, in the Italy of the fifteenth century. His gilded equestrian statue crowns his monument in the interior; the recumbent statue of his daughter Medea is especially admirable for pronounced artistic worth. Outside the Porta S. Agostino is the Accademia Carrara, containing a picture-gallery.

When all is said and done, Bergamo has not only played a certain prosaic part in Italian trade as the place of the famous fair,

## *The Italian Lakes*

and as sponsor for those long-legged Bergamesque sheep which come from the near-by mountains, but it has also won a picturesque share in Italian art, since it is a tradition on the Italian stage that Harlequin is a Bergamesque, both in bearing and dialect. Then there are the musicians.

LA LOMBARDE FETE

1912

... Berga  
... the near-by  
... picturesque  
... tradition on  
... as a Kergar  
... Then

***A LOMBARD FÊTE***







## CHAPTER XXIV

### DONIZETTI AND THE SEVEN NOTES

MUSICAL taste grows and outgrows. Donizetti with his "Lucia di Lammermoor" and "La Favorita" may now seem antiquated to some of us. Yet in the operatic world Donizetti formed an evolutionary link between Rossini, whose manner undoubtedly influenced him at first, and Verdi, whose vigour he forestalled somewhat in his later works.

A tablet has been fixed to the wall of a house in the suburb of Bergamo called Borgo Canale, to mark the place where Gaetano Donizetti was born on November 29, 1797, six years after Rossini.

Writing to his faithful master, Mayr, in 1843, Donizetti thus described his birth-place: "I was born underground in Borgo Canale; you had to go down by the cellar stairs — where no light ever penetrated."

As far as is known, his parents showed no

## *The Italian Lakes*

talent for music. His father was doorkeeper in the public pawnshop of Bergamo, with 550 lire a year. His mother earned a little as a linen weaver. But his two brothers were musically inclined. Giuseppe, the elder, leaving his trade of tailor, entered the army of Napoleon I. in the capacity of a musician, and eventually drifted to Constantinople, where he became chief of the Sultan's military music, as well as director of concerts in the Seraglio. The second brother, Francesco, also became interested in military music, and directed the city band of Bergamo. For these details, and many subsequent ones, the author is indebted to Verzino Edoardo Clemente, who has published a collection of letters and documents which throw new light upon Donizetti's life.

In 1805, Simon Mayr, a native of Bavaria, but for many years *maestro di capella* of the Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, founded a free school of music, to which young Donizetti was admitted among the first group of scholars. He was nine years of age at the time. Another pupil of Mayr at this time was a certain Merelli, who later became director of the Imperial

## *Donizetti and the Seven Notes*

Theatre in Vienna, and was instrumental in attracting Donizetti to that city.

Donizetti's first musical composition was a little piece entitled "Il Piccolo Compositore di Musica." It was played on the occasion of an annual examination in the school. His progress was so rapid that a public subscription was raised to enable him to study counterpoint under Mattei at the Liceo Musicale, in Bologna. Returning to Bergamo in 1818, Donizetti once more took up his studies under Mayr, in order to fit himself as a composer of operas.

It so happened that about this time a certain Sicilian impresario, Zancla by name, happening to pass through Bergamo, heard from Merelli of Donizetti's talent, and promptly gave the young musician an order for an opera. Thus "Enrico di Borgogna," Donizetti's first full-fledged opera, came to be composed. Merelli wrote the libretto. Zancla produced the work for his opening piece in the autumn season of 1818, at the theatre S. Lucca in Venice. With this, the new composer was launched on his career. "Enrico di Borgogna" was sufficiently successful to warrant Zancla in ordering further operas. Donizetti wrote a number for vari-

## *The Italian Lakes*

ous companies under the management of this impresario, working with prodigious rapidity. In less than thirty years he actually produced sixty operas; two more were not brought out until after his death. They form a bewildering array, indeed, treating of a great variety of historical subjects which could give room for dramatic handling.

Besides these operas, of which many are quite unknown to English and American audiences, Donizetti has left us an oratorio, "Il Diluvio Universale," many quartettes, piano and orchestra pieces, and short songs.

It would be hard to say how much popularity Donizetti's operas owed to the artists who interpreted them: Lablache, father and son; Duprez, Grisi, Mario, Jenny Lind, Sontag, Patti, Albani, and many other famous singers.

If we look over Donizetti's operatic list to-day, the eye rests on "Anna Bolena," produced at Milan, the Teatro Carcano, December 26, 1830. This opera first attracted the attention of Europe to the composer. Donizetti also had a "Faust," produced at Naples, in S. Carlo, January 12, 1832. The year 1835 heralded two of his triumphs. On March 12th "Marino Faliero" appeared at

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the Italian theatre in Paris, and was received with utmost enthusiasm by the public and press of that city. On the 26th of September, the since widely known "Lucia di Lammermoor" had an instantaneous success at the S. Carlo in Naples. In 1840 followed two operas which have shown extraordinary staying powers: "La Figlia del Reggimento" (Paris, Opera Comique, February 11th) and "La Favorita" (also in Paris, but at the Theatre of the Opera, December 2d).

Finally, Donizetti's "Linda di Chamounix" took him to Vienna, whither Merelli, his former schoolmate under Mayr and his first librettist, had invited him. Soon after, Donizetti was made *Kapellmeister* to the Austrian court, and we find him thereafter oscillating continually between Vienna, Paris, Milan, and Rome.

It was in 1843, while in Paris, putting his "Don Sebastiano di Portogallo" (libretto by Scribe) on the stage, that Donizetti showed the first symptoms of breaking down. He suffered much anxiety and worry in connection with this opera. Furthermore, it was not entirely successful.

In the fall of 1847, Donizetti was brought back to Bergamo, where he silently passed

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away the next year. A tablet in the Via Gaetano Donizetti marks the house where he died, fifty-one years of age.

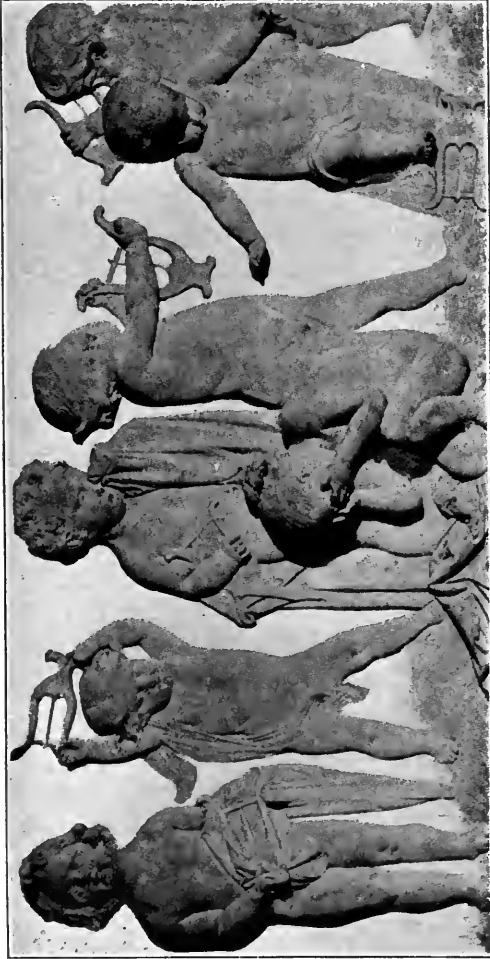
In S. Maria Maggiore, near the cathedral, stands the monumental tomb erected to his memory by his brothers. It is the work of Vincenzo Vela, a sculptor who, as has been noted before, has left a great deal that is excellent in the region of the Italian lakes and in the Southern Alps.

On top, a symbolical figure of Harmony, prostrate with grief, sits and mourns. Donizetti's head appears in a medallion furnished with two eagles' wings, to express the prodigious rapidity of his musical faculty. The keyboard of an old harpsichord is also represented.

But the part of this monument which attracts special attention is a frieze on the pedestal.

Seven cherubs in bas-relief symbolize the seven notes, each with a lyre, and each expressing grief in a different manner. *Do* seems uncertain what to do with his lyre, and so holds it joyously before him; there is happy expectation on his plump cheeks, on his rosebud parted lips, and in his upturned eyes. *Re* is about to hurl his lyre





DONIZETTI'S SEVEN NOTES



## *Donizetti and the Seven Notes*

to the ground; he wears a Greek fillet on his baby brow, an expression of passing petulance momentarily clouds his dimpled face. *Mi* has tucked his lyre under his arm, and is holding some scanty drapery to a weeping eye. *Fa*, distinguished by a Psyche-knot, is kneeling with face buried in hands, a garment thrown over the lyre. *Sol* pretends to be very angry indeed, for he is deliberately pulling his lyre to pieces, regardless of consequences. *La* seems to show temper by stamping on the inoffensive instrument; he looks every inch a beautiful young seraph; but he stands in front of *Si* in such a manner that one cannot well make out what the latter is doing.

Never was a musician's tomb so appropriately decorated, or the notes so daintily expressed in sculpture, — the arch little notes that do homage to the master. This happy artistic conceit deserves to be widely known and admired, but Bergamo, as already intimated, does not lie directly on the beaten track. Occasionally a foreign silk merchant pays it a visit, for, with neighbouring Brescia, Bergamo collects and distributes many millions of cocoons annually. Perhaps a historian or two may find the way thither,

## *The Italian Lakes*

or a painter in search of old masters, but more rarely a musician, to do honour to the composer, some of whose works still hold the boards so valiantly in many parts of the world after so many years.

## CHAPTER XXV

### LAGO D'ISEO AND LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

THE Lake of Iseo stands more aloof and withdrawn from travel, both of the ordinary kind and of the tourist variety, than the other Italian lakes. It is still waiting in a measure to be discovered or rediscovered, as the case may be. If one wishes to gain an idea of the atmosphere which pervaded the other Italian lakes before the era of modern cosmopolitan travel reached them, when they were still wholly local and circumscribed within Italian habits and customs, then Lago d'Iseo of to-day may fairly serve as an example. While the rest of the world has progressed into the twentieth century, the banks of Lago d'Iseo are still dreaming in the eighteenth, crude and primitive from one standpoint and fascinating from another.

There are certain aspects of this lake

## *The Italian Lakes*

which recall Lake Lugano, though Iseo has less forest and more blue in its mountain shadows. The steamboats, too, are about on a par with those of Lugano. Again, a momentary intensity of water-colouring or a shore outline will suddenly conjure up the Achensee in Tyrol. At the upper end, where the stream of the Oglio brings down much melted snow from the great white Adamello range, the water in June assumes the pale opaque blue characteristic of the Lake of Brienz in Switzerland.

But Lago d'Iseo is certainly not any one of these lakes, it is distinctly itself; its shores, though subalpine, have the slap-dash of Southern Italy and are almost Neapolitan in spots.

Lago d'Iseo is long and narrow, — some fifteen miles long and only from one to three miles wide. It is superbly dominated at the northern end by the snow mountains of the Adamello group. John Addington Symonds writes of it as "sterner, solitary Lake Iseo," in comparison with the other Italian lakes. The customary approaches on the south are from Bergamo to Lovere, and from Brescia to the town of Iseo; or, on the north, from the Val Camonica to Lovere.

## *Lago d' Iseo*

Taking the steamboat from Iseo for the trip up the lake to Lovere, the first impression the traveller receives is undoubtedly that of the remote romanticism of the landscape, into which a sense of adventure creeps as we advance.

There is nothing remarkable about the peat bogs at the southern approach to the lake, the place Iseo itself looks flat and primitive, but once fairly launched on the waters the interest grows with every mile. At Tavernola there has been recently a great landslide, then comes a little island with church, loggia, and walls effectively grouped; farther on rises a large rocky island, Montisola, gaunt and sterile above, but its feet clothed with fishing villages, Peschiera, Magaglio, and Siviano. This island is actually the largest of any on the Italian lakes. The nets are out drying and being mended alongshore, so that Bergamo and Brescia may receive the result of the catch. At Sale Marasino the eye is attracted up the steep mountainside to a house painted in red and yellow. A woman is seen in the act of stepping out upon a balcony and throwing back a green blind. She seems to stand there a long time immovably, and as you continue

## *The Italian Lakes*

to watch without detecting any motion, the conviction at last dawns upon you that you have been caught once more by a familiar but genial Italian trick born of exuberant fancy,—the woman is painted on the side of the house.

Now comes another island, small and deserted, with the ruins of what might once have been a fort. Many olive-trees clothe the banks, and, of course, the washerwomen are there doing the family washing as on the shores of all the other Italian lakes. The same heavy-laden barges, too, are crawling before a fair wind. At Marone a man comes aboard with a bicycle and throws a modern note into the picture. After touching at several more stations, the steamboat turns straight for Lovere, the imposing-looking crescent-shaped town at the upper end of the lake.

Seen from a distance, Lovere, with its line of trees on the quay, its arcaded houses and prominent balconies, looks almost citified after the tiny places along the shores of Lago d'Iseo, which have been seen on the way up.

There is a touch of Naples about Lovere's water-front, it looks so architectural, but,



## Lago d'Iseo

like the larger city, Lovere on nearer acquaintance turns to the visitor a decidedly shabby side and a less favourable interior. A long arcaded building at the southern end of the town is called the Accademia Tadini, and contains a collection of paintings. There is a fine church and a *collegio* on the hill, with long porticos. A really charming hotel has been built at the northern end, and small as the place is, it possesses no less than three monuments, one to Garibaldi, another to the soldiers of the war of independence, and a third to a Count Tadini. It was not the fault of the good townspeople that a fourth monument does not grace the esplanade, if rumour is to be believed. As will be related later, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu claimed that she had great difficulty in restraining the citizens from putting up a statue to her, as a mark of the honour her residence conferred upon them.

The ancient Albergo Leon d'Oro, the Golden Lion of Lovere, is reputed to be more than four hundred years old. As a hotel, it is almost incredibly picturesque and queer. You enter into a dark, forbidding courtyard, containing a fountain and basin. A flight of steps mounts to the dining-room

## *The Italian Lakes*

on an upper floor, where a sort of loggia overlooking the lake is capable of being used on fine days. About two miles south of Lovere, by the road to Bergamo, is the striking gorge called the Orrido di Tinazzo.

As the sun declines before our eyes, the first impression of Lago d'Iseo deepens into conviction; its aloofness and romanticism mark it as a thing apart, a forgotten corner. The people have no distinctive costume any more, doubtless much of its eighteenth century gaiety, as depicted by Lady Montagu, has evaporated with the fall of the Venetian Republic, of which the lake once formed a part, and modern industry, in the shape of a large iron foundry, has placed a utilitarian stamp upon Lovere, yet, with all these changes, the town has charm to-day. The blare of the trumpets from a detachment of Alpini troops resounds through the streets, barges have hoisted huge square sails for a fair wind, and over on the eastern shore cattle are tramping on the highway to the mountains.

There is life and there is light and much colour on land and water and in the sky that arches over Lago d'Iseo.

## *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*

*Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1690 -  
1762)*

Lady Montagu's career stamped her as an extraordinary figure in the diplomatic and literary circles of Europe during the period prior to the American and French revolutions. She was the daughter of Lord Dorchester, later the Duke of Kingston, and of Lady Mary Fielding, a cousin of the novelist. As a child, clever and attractive, she developed into a brilliant woman in the society of London. At the age of twenty she translated the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus. She was a friend of Addison, Pope, and of others who belonged to the literary coterie of her day.

Her husband having been appointed British ambassador to the Porte, she resided in Turkey for two years. It is said that she was the third Englishwoman known to have visited Turkey, and it was there that she wrote those of her famous "Letters" which described the Oriental life of that time. This she did with much clearness and liveliness of style. Upon her return from the East she lived for twenty years in England. In 1739, thinking to benefit her health, and perhaps

## *The Italian Lakes*

also because of her growing unpopularity in certain circles, she decided to leave England and, with her husband's consent, took up her residence upon the Continent of Europe. She travelled to Venice, Rome, and Naples, then settled for a time in a palace at Brescia.

It was from Brescia that, upon the advice of her physician, she went to Lovere on Lago d'Iseo, situated at that time in territory of the Venetian Republic. This was in the year 1747. Lovere became in fact her regular residence for some years. She bought a deserted palace there, as well as a dairy-house and a farm in the neighbourhood. On the banks of Lago d'Iseo she planned her garden and read the books her daughter, the Countess of Bute, sent her out from England, entertaining the local gentry and nobility, and in general enjoyed herself in the hearty, sprightly, and independent fashion which was characteristic of her. She made occasional visits to Genoa and Padua. In 1758 she settled for three years in Venice, and did not return to England until 1761, where she died in the course of the year 1762.

Turning over the leaves of Lady Montagu's "Works," as published in London in

## *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*

1817, one comes across many letters dated from Louvere (Lovere), giving interesting little pictures of life in this secluded piece of Italian territory during the period preceding the great European upheaval. These letters are addressed to her daughter, the Countess of Bute. Without classification, or chronological order, the following excerpts are presented as containing interesting details.

In a letter dated July 21, 1747, Lady Montagu writes:

"I am now in a place the most beautifully romantic I ever saw in my life. . . . I had the ill luck to be surprised with a storm on the lake, that if I had not been near a little port (where I passed a night in a very poor inn), the vessel might have been lost. A fair wind brought me hither next morning early. . . . The whole lake of Iseo . . . is all surrounded with these impassable mountains, the sides of which, toward the bottom, are so thick set with villages (and in most of them gentlemen's seats) that I do not believe there is anywhere above a mile distance one from another, which adds very much to the beauty of the prospect."

In writing of life in Lovere she mentions

## *The Italian Lakes*

an opera "which is performed three times in the week," also "diversions on the water, where all the town assembles every night, and never without music; but we have none so rough as trumpets, kettle-drums, and French horns: they are all violins, lutes, mandolins, and flutes doux." Writing Feb. 2, 1747, she states: "We have hitherto had no winter, to the great sorrow of the people here, who are in fear of wanting ice in the summer, which is as necessary as bread." A letter of Aug. 22, 1749, states: "We are all very quiet here, all the *beau monde* being hurried away to the fair at Bergamo."

On June 19, 1751, she informs her daughter that "this little town thinking themselves highly honoured and obliged by my residence: they intended me an extraordinary mark of it, having determined to set up my statue in the most conspicuous place: the marble was bespoke, and the sculptor bargained with before I knew anything of the matter; and it would have been erected without my knowledge, if it had not been necessary for him to see me to take the resemblance." She declares she had great difficulty in persuading the good people to

## *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*

desist, finally placing her refusal on the score of religious scruples. In this letter she enumerates jocularly among her benefactions to the place: "I have introduced French rolls, custards, minced pies, and plum pudding, which they are very fond of. 'Tis impossible to bring them to conform to syllabub, which is so unnatural a mixture in their eyes they are even shocked to see me eat it, but I expect immortality from the science of butter-making, in which they are become so skillful from my instructions."

In a letter dated June 23, 1752, Lady Montagu, writing of the lake and of her palace, tells her daughter: "The lake itself is different from any other I ever saw or read of, being the colour of the sea, rather deeper tinged with green, which convinces me that the surrounding mountains are full of minerals. . . . This town, which is the largest of twenty-five that are built on the banks of the lake of Isco (*sic*), is near two miles long, and the figure of a semicircle, and situated at the northern extremity." She describes her house as an ancient, half-ruined palace, "with a very pretty garden in terraces down to the water, and a court behind the house. It is founded on a rock, and the

## *The Italian Lakes*

walls so thick they will probably remain as long as the earth." The whole purchase was made for the sum of one hundred pounds.

In a letter dated July 23, 1753, there are many details concerning her farm. It consisted of a dairy-house and garden made out of a former vineyard, and described as "a long mile from the castle." At the farm she spent much of her time. It was situated "on a bank, forming a kind of peninsula, raised from the river Oglio fifty feet." Her garden was full of arbours; she speaks of making a camp kitchen, where the fresh fish was cooked and promptly eaten, of a little wood carpeted with violets and strawberries; inhabited by nightingales. She writes of her life at the farm: "I generally rise at six, put myself at the head of my needlewomen and work with them till nine. I then inspect my dairy, and take a turn among my poultry, which is a very large inquiry. I have, at present, two hundred chickens, besides turkeys, geese, ducks, and peacocks. All things have hitherto prospered under my care; my bees and silkworms are doubled, and I am told that, without accidents, my capital will be so in two years' time. At



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eleven o'clock I retire to my books: I dare not indulge myself in that pleasure above an hour. . . . The fishery of this part of the river belongs to me; and my fisherman's little boat (to which I have a green lute-string awning) serves me for a barge."

During her residence abroad, and principally at Lovere, Lady Montagu read much of the literature which was making a stir in England, and passed judgment upon it in her characteristic way. Fielding's works, Smollett's, Pope's, Dean Swift's, and Bolingbroke's, all came in for witty comment in her letters to her daughter. She had perhaps most to say about Samuel Richardson's novels. She was also much interested in the education of her grandchildren, and wrote freely to her daughter on that subject and on diplomatic questions.

Altogether Lady Mary Wortley Montagu displayed interest in a great range of subjects, her versatility carried her far afield, beyond the boundaries to which the women of her day were ordinarily confined. Her daring may not always have been marked by discretion, nor her judgments by accuracy, but it is quite possible that her fame as a

## *The Italian Lakes*

traveller and a writer may have helped to break down some of the limitations and restrictions commonly placed upon women's abilities in her day.

## CHAPTER XXVI

BRESCIA: ARNOLD OF BRESCIA; BAYARD SANS  
PEUR ET SANS REPROCHE

BRESCIA'S castle hill accords with its proud title of *l'armata*. It has been a city of sieges and the place of the making of arms. It was burned and sacked by the French in 1512, and bombarded in 1849 by the Austrians. Thus in times past it has spoken mainly of war and weapons, and still leans dependently against the hill the summit of which is occupied by the citadel. Originally a Roman colony, then a free imperial city, Brescia was, like Bergamo, for centuries a redoubtable stronghold of the Venetian Republic. To-day the soldiers on the streets and the trumpets near the barracks proclaim a united Italy. The city does not lie upon the heights, like the ancient *città* of Bergamo, and to that extent is less striking as a picture; with its situation in the alpine fore-hills, it may rather be likened to Bo-

## *The Italian Lakes*

logna, recumbent against the ample sides of the spurs of the Apennines. Brescia's streets, too, though narrow enough to the apprehension of any one coming from newer worlds, are nevertheless wider than those of lofty Bergamo.

The conquests of peace are signalized by the works of its principal painter, Il Moretto, lavishly displayed in local churches and galleries, by great baskets of silk cocoons being carted through the streets, and by the beating of ironware and brass kettles, which sound rises to the ear as we lean for a moment over the fortifications of the citadel. From up there the eye ranges over the great plain southward and toward the Alps northward. In the city streets, from this window or that, there issues a pleasant and very Italian smell of something cooking, — with garlic; a few men are stretched out asleep upon the sculptured stone benches of the Municipal Palace; the mules of the Alpini troops pass by, laden with great loaves of dark bread carried in nets.

As in the case of most Italian cities, the railroad station lies outside the gates of Brescia, so that a veritable entry has to be made past the local octroi customs. The municipal

## *Brescia*

centre of Brescia is the Piazza Vecchia. Here is the superb Palazzo Municipio, commonly called La Loggia, white, magnificent, and ornate to a degree. Beneath it is a vaulted hall gracefully arched and columned. There, too, is the ancient round Duomo, called La Rotonda, and close by the massive Broletto, or former town hall, likewise the silver and gold smiths' shops, and a long arcade. Not far off are the remains of a Roman temple with a marble colonnade of ten Corinthian columns. The *cella* of the temple is now used as a museum, and contains the famous bronze statue of winged Victory, excavated in 1826. Indeed Brescia contains much for the scholar and the art lover. The grand Biblioteca Comunale with valuable parchments; the Galleria Municipale, which is especially rich in pictures of Moretto and Romanino; and the churches rejoicing in paintings of the same artists,—all these open their treasures to the searcher for the old and the beautiful.

Brescia also recalls two special names worthy of more than mere mention, since they have become world possessions,—the names of Arnold of Brescia and the Chevalier Bayard.

## *The Italian Lakes*

### *Arnold (Arnaldo) of Brescia*

Neither the year of Arnold's birth, nor the usual facts about his parents or his childhood are accurately known. He was of a noble family, so much is known, and born probably at the end of the eleventh, or the beginning of the twelfth, century. He chose an ecclesiastical career, and went to France to study under the famous teacher, Peter Abelard, one of the earliest of the religious reformers,—this probably before the year 1126. Returning to Brescia, he lived simply, but was prodigal in his eloquence against the ecclesiastical abuses of the time. Especially did he set his face against the secular or temporal power of the Church. His activity in this direction led to his deposition from priestly office and to his expulsion from Italy.

First of all he went to his former teacher, Abelard, and taught and preached in Paris; then he sought asylum in Zürich, in Switzerland, and taught there. Persecuted even from that city, he seems to have disappeared for a time, to be next heard of in Rome itself. The conditions in Rome were peculiar at the time of his arrival, in that the people

## *Bayard Sans Peur et Sans Reproche*

had declared a republic, and were trying to throw off the temporal power of the Church entirely. Arnold showed his interest in this cause by addressing the citizens on the Capitol hill and in their popular assemblies, although he does not appear to have been either the originator nor at first the leader of the revolution, but only associated himself with a movement he found already established. For some ten years thereafter his ideas dominated the city. Adrian IV., the only English Pope, drove Arnold from Rome, and there is reason to believe that the reformer was soon after captured and put to death.

## *Bayard Sans Peur et Sans Reproche*

Among narratives of the age of chivalry the history of Bayard, the good Chevalier *sans peur et sans reproche*, compiled by the Loyal Serviteur, stands in the first rank. It is now almost a certainty that the name of the Loyal Serviteur was Jacque de Mailles. The narrative was originally printed in Paris in 1527. The Château-Bayard is in France, in the valley of Graisivaudan, about a mile

## *The Italian Lakes*

from the station of Pontcharra near Grenoble in Dauphiné.

Bayard's eventful career, full of feats of arms, was further marked by his exploits at the siege of Brescia in 1512. The city had fallen to France as a result of the League of Cambray, but the Venetians had pounced upon it and held it under Messer Andrea Gritti, the Venetian Proveditore. When the French attacked, they shouted, "France, France!" They of the company of the good Chevalier cried, "Bayard, Bayard!" The enemy shouted, "Marco, Marco!" The Chevalier was wounded in the assault on the first fort, but the Duke of Nemours, that *gentil* Gaston de Foix, and the rest of the French army used in the attack, pressed on and defeated the Venetians. The Loyal Serviteur states that the plunder of the place was valued at three million crowns, and that he felt sure the taking of so much wealth at Brescia caused the French to abandon the war.

The Chevalier kept his bed, as the result of his wound, for about a month. Then he arose cured. He showed his magnanimity toward the people of the house which had harboured him in a manner entertainingly



## *Bayard Sans Peur et Sans Reproche*

told by the Loyal Serviteur. He states, "The lady of his house, who always held herself to be his prisoner, together with her husband and children, and that the household goods she had were his (for so had the French treated the other houses, as she knew well), had many imaginings. . . . The morning of the day on which after dinner the good Chevalier was to depart, his hostess, with one of her serving-men carrying a small box of steel, came into his chamber, where she found that he was reposing in a chair. . . . She threw herself on her knees, but straightway he raised her up, and would never suffer her to speak a word until in the first place she was seated near him." The good lady brought Bayard this box full of money. At which the Loyal Serviteur states: "The noble Lord, who never in his life valued money, began to laugh, and then said, 'Madam, how many ducats are there in this box?'" She told him 2,500 ducats. He refused to accept them at first, but, upon her repeated requests, he finally took the money, saying, "But fetch me your two daughters, for I would bid them adieu." Then the good Chevalier, taking the money in hand, gave each of the daughters a thou-

## *The Italian Lakes*

sand ducats as a dowry, and the remaining five hundred he returned to the mother for the poor. So the "flower of chivalry" left Brescia, followed by the loving good wishes of at least one happy family.

A dozen years after, in 1524, the French having made an unfortunate invasion of Milanese territory, held at that time by the Spaniards, were forced to beat a retreat. The loyal Bayard fell during this retreat as the result of a bullet hurled from an arquebuse.



ON LAKE GARDA



## CHAPTER XXVII

LAKE GARDA — THE WESTERN SHORE FROM DESENZANO TO RIVA: CATULLUS AND THE PENINSULA OF SERMIONE, SALO, THE RIVIERA (GARDONE - GARGNANO), THE CLIFFS OF TREMOSINE

INEFFABLE as to its blue colouring, which is more profound than the darkest sapphire and yet tinged with a recollection of the forget-me-not, stretching in a solid expanse seemingly without shallows or weak spots, broad and majestic, serious and earnest, — this is Lake Garda as it returns to the memory after many days! It is no mere pond of great size to catch the alpine rainfall, but an inland sea with a coast-line, with sea-gulls, with islands, and with real sailing-vessels. Its very storms are of the sea, rough and boisterous, and its length of wave calls for seamanship. It is indeed a far cry from quiet Lake Orta, reposing in its pretty cup of vernal green on the western extremity of

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the Italian lakes, to this grand body of water on the eastern end, raising open questions and dealing in large ideas, set off by long-drawn mountain ranges and remote backgrounds.

In travelling from west to east, from the mountains to the sea, Lake Garda acts as a preparation for the Adriatic. Whatever theory or theories may be held to account for the origin of the other Italian lakes, Lake Garda itself gives many topographical tokens of being a remnant sea, separated from the parent branches east and west. Its affinities lie with Genoa and Venice rather than with the lesser alpine lakes. It has moments that recall even the Bay of Naples, or the Gulf of Levantine Smyrna.

At the southern end, by Desenzano, the shores of Lake Garda are flat, and there the lake gives the appearance of advancing into the Italian plain, but its upper end, at Riva, is enclosed in great masses of frowning and rugged heights. Therefore, looking the length of the lake from the shore-front of the northern end, toward Desenzano, the water is seen to reach to the very horizon line and seems even to dip a little over the edge. From there one involuntarily exclaims, the

## *Lake Garda*

sea, the sea! It is as though one were scanning a limitless, trackless expanse of colour, as rich and vivid as the waters of the West Indian Ocean.

Indeed, Lake Garda is the most imposing of the Italian lakes. When, after passing in review the special virtues of wide Maggiore, of sinuous and smiling Como, of Lugano with its emerald recesses, and of the others, we reach Lake Garda, the impression is that we have found the father of them all. Measurements show Lake Maggiore to be a little longer than Lake Garda, thirty-seven miles as against thirty-four and one-half miles, but Lake Maggiore's full extent cannot be as readily measured with the eye as can Lake Garda's, and the impression of superior size remains with the latter. Lake Garda expands to a breadth of eleven miles, and its bottom reaches a maximum depth of 281 feet below the level of the sea. These two big Italian lakes have this in common, however, that their upper reaches are both in the hands of strangers. As on Maggiore the Swiss hold Locarno, so on Garda the Austrians rule over Riva. Hence both lakes also have imposing Italian flotillas, manned by the cus-

## *The Italian Lakes*

toms department and designed to cope with smuggling over the artificial border.

As contrasted with the lakes north of the Alps, Lake Garda has a smaller surface area than the lakes of Geneva and Constance. It is fed principally by the Sarca River, which enters at the northern end between Riva and Torbole, where it is an Austrian stream, and issues at Peschiera with the name of the Mincio and under Italian rule. The time of low water is in winter, before the melting of the snow, as is the case with most of the alpine and subalpine lakes. Fish of excellent quality are found in Lake Garda, and are sold in considerable quantities outside of Italy, in Austria and even in France. Trout and salmon are still caught in its waters, principally at the entrance of the Sarca River. The right to fish is said to be free and unrestricted during the regular fishing season. At one time the lake was actually united at Peschiera with the Adige and the Po by canals, and thus placed in communication with the Adriatic, but this connection was severed by the Venetians in order to cut off the trade of Mantua, and has never been restored. The lake is mentioned by Pliny



## Lake Garda

the Elder, as well as by Strabo and Ptolemy. The Roman name was Benacus.

Lake Garda has all along shared with Lake Como in the attentions of the poets. Virgil was born not far from its shores, at a little place called Andes, which has been identified as the modern village of Pietole near Mantua. He seems to have set the fashion for other poets by giving Lake Garda a line or two, though expressing his preference for Lake Como at the same time. In his Georgics, Book II., in a passage wherein he is singing the praises of Italy and enumerating its charms, the following lines occur, as translated by the poet Dryden:

“Our spacious lakes ; thee, Larius, first ; and next  
Benacus, with tempest'ous billows vexed.”

Catullus wrote of the headland of Sermione. Claudian, too, the so-called “last of the Roman poets,” sang of Lake Garda as well as of Lake Como.

Then came the mighty Dante, who opened his description of Lake Garda with a line which after many intervening years still sings musically sweet:

“*Suso in Italia bella giace un lago.*” (Inferno xx. 61.)

## *The Italian Lakes*

This descriptive passage appears as follows in the English prose translation of Rev. H. F. Tozier, M. A.: "On earth in fair Italy, at the foot of the Alpine chain which is the boundary of Germany above Tirol, there lies a lake by name Benaco. By a thousand fountains and more, I ween, between Garda and Val Camonica the Pennine Alps are moistened with the water which stagnates in the above-named lake. Midway in that region there is a spot where the shepherd of Trent, and he of Brescia, and he of Verona might each give his blessing, if he were passing by that way. Peschiera, that fortress fair and strong to defy the men of Brescia and Bergamo, lies where the surrounding shore sinks to its lowest level. There must all the water descend which Benaco cannot contain within its bosom, and forming a river, it flows down through green pastures. So soon as it starts on its course, it is no longer called Benaco but Mencio, as far as Governo, where it falls into the Po."

Dante's reference to the Pennine Alps as situated near Lake Garda was due doubtless to the uncertain alpine nomenclature of his day. The Pennine Alps are much farther

## *Lake Garda*

west and are crossed by the great St. Bernard Pass. The use of the word "stagnates" in connection with the water of Lake Garda strikes one as most inappropriate. The meeting-point of the three shepherds was probably Campione on the western side of the lake.

Moreover, as though the names of Virgil, Claudian, and Dante were not enough, Lake Garda, coming down to modern times, must needs engage the attention of Goethe also, — but of him more anon.

The usual approaches to Lake Garda are at Desenzano and Riva. Desenzano is a station on the main line from Milan to Verona, and Riva is reached by a narrow-gauge road branching off from the station of Mori on the great Brenner route. It is possible to reach the lake at Peschiera, another station on the main line from Milan to Verona, or at Salo by steam-tram from Brescia.

The special advantage of crossing from Mori to Riva is that one obtains on the way one of those sudden views of extraordinary brilliancy which remain closely enshrined in memory and are cherished in after years. The train mounts from Mori in the wide valley of the Adige to the desolate green

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lake of Loppio, and thence, after further climbing, reaches without warning of any kind a position at Nago far above Lake Garda. There is a point and a moment when the vast lake bursts into view upon the unprepared sight. It lies stretched out to its full extent below, mile upon mile of powerful indigo and tender sky-blue mixed in equal quantities, producing sparkling marine values that recall the Mediterranean. The houses of Torbole lie at our feet, and off there the great rock and castle of Arco. The eye ranges from the lake to the stupendous rock formation of Southern Tyrol, to that debatable land of romance, where Latin and Teuton have touched elbows for many centuries, overlapping now and again, swaying this way and that according to the power and push of nationality and language in each age.

But let us suppose that the exigencies of our travel itinerary demand a southern approach to Lake Garda. Then some bright morning the bell in the bow of the steamboat will call us to the quay and pier of Desenzano. An expectant air moves over the great lake, inviting contemplation of good things to come, and making amends for the un-



AT THE FOUNTAIN IN THE VILLAGE OF SAN TOMASO,  
NEAR NAGO



## *Lake Garda*

kempt and shiftless water-front of Desenzano. It is hard to compliment Desenzano upon anything but its inspiring view. Apparently little attempt has been made to beautify its low-lying banks. There is, however, what may be described as a sandy beach, which is in truth a rarity upon the Italian lakes. At Desenzano one seems to be in an out-of-the-way fishing village on the coast of Calabria. The men playing bowls near the landing-place shout at the slightest provocation. Day and night there seems to be so much to talk about in Desenzano, and so little to say, that the eyes turn instinctively to the little dike and lighthouse which mark the lake outlet, in order to search the distant mountains for peace. And this is not saying that Desenzano is not an admirable starting-point for the lake trip.

As the steamboat moves off, a heavy haze confirms our impression of the lake's resemblance to the sea. The humidity gives a special shimmer to the air. The slopes of the western shore gleam as with a fall of fresh spring snow in an atmosphere shot through and through with the rays of the southern sun. Presently the marine effect is further heightened by the sight of sailboats

## *The Italian Lakes*

with two masts and sails to match, brown and yellow by turns, as of Venice, and looking as though they had come overland from the great lagoon city. Indeed the sailboats of Lake Garda are no mere rowboat make-shifts as on Maggiore or Como, essaying a temporary hoist of sail in a fair wind, — they are actual two-masted vessels. Their tinted sails and archaic models carry one back in thought to old pictures of mediæval naval expeditions. The fishing-boats, too, are quaint craft not unlike our own sharp-pointed canoes.

### *Catullus and the Peninsula of Sermione*

The remarkable peninsula of Sermione gives out bravely into the lake not far from Desenzano, and our first stop is at a fishing village of the same name, provided with drawbridge and mediæval gate. An ancient castle of the Scaligeri catches our attention, with its battlements and square crenelated towers. There is a castle quadrangle and a special port for the castle. The tip of the headland of Sermione is covered with olive-trees, casting grateful shade upon the grass beneath, and inviting a summer residence.



## *Catullus and the Peninsula of Sermione*

Indeed the Roman poet Catullus, a native of near-by Verona, addressed some charming lines to the headland of Sermione upon his return from Bithynia in Asia Minor. Thomas Moore has translated these lines for us, and they are to be found in his "Poems" under a heading, "Translation from Catullus." A few of these lines are presented here:

"Sweet Sirmio! thou, the very eye  
Of all peninsulas and isles  
That in our lakes of silver lie,  
Or sleep, enwreathed by Neptune's smiles, —

. . . . .

Shine out, my beautiful, my own  
Sweet Sirmio! greet thy master back.

. . . . .

And thou, fair lake, whose water quaffs  
The light of heaven like Lydia's sea,  
Rejoice, rejoice, — let all that laughs  
Abroad, at home, laugh out for me."

Catullus spent some time on Sermione. The ruins of what are described as his villa, his bath, and grotto are shown to travellers, but their connection with Catullus himself cannot be said to have been established, although the ruins are doubtless of Roman origin. There are subterranean passages,

## *The Italian Lakes*

substructions, some brick flooring, and massive arched masonry. Catullus's thought must have turned at times to the contrasts before him as he looked up the lake. Here the open water, there the narrows made by the profiles of the mountains drawing nearer; here the olive and the lemon and the noon-day ease, there the mountain forests and pastures and the alpine struggle for existence.

The steamboat rounds a rocky headland rising abruptly from the water's edge, the Rocca di Manerba. Some children can be seen on top herding their goats. For an instant one might be travelling in some Norwegian fjord, but the next moment the eye rests upon an island of the summer seas, such as the Italian lakes alone can produce. It is the Isola di Garda or Isola Lecchi, with a château of the ducal family De Ferrari. In its general appearance this island recalls Isola Bella on Lake Maggiore, though much simpler and less genial. A garden has been constructed upon vaulted terraces, and there are reported to be underground grottoes as well. There is, however, no pretence made of such elaborate terracing and gardening as on the more famous island, and Isola di

## *Salo*

Garda looks as though a portion of it at least was allowed to grow wild.

## *Salo*

The steamboat now approaches a town of considerable size and high colouring. Salo literally runs riot in colour. As the steamboat passes the water-front to reach the landing-stage, the tourist, accustomed to the soberer north, believes himself to be looking into one of those kaleidoscopic toys which give one a mixture of all the colours under the sun in return for a pull of the string. There are many gay water-fronts on the Italian lakes, but that of Salo, I veritably believe, is the gaudiest of them all. The local colour has run the gamut of possibilities and is put on thick besides. Here is a house painted to look like wall-paper in patterns; there is one decorated with a landscape painting. There are pink houses, pale green, yellow, and salmon coloured houses, some bespangled with wide awnings, others fringed with the family washing in many colours, and set off by flowered terraces and green arbours. In the little harbour yellow and brown sails are flapping in the breeze.

## *The Italian Lakes*

As though this spectacle were not enough when seen singly, Salo must needs duplicate the whole of itself in water so profoundly blue as to suggest the bluing which women put into their wash-tubs.

No wonder that in a place of such multi-coloured fancifulness an inn should be frankly dedicated "To Lost Time" (*"Al Tempo Perduto"*).

At Salo we get our first glimpse of that lemon culture which is peculiar to Lake Garda. And since these lemon plantations occur at most villages along the western shore of the lake and at many on the eastern shore as well, a description of the method of culture may here be of interest. The lemons of Lake Garda are said to be of superior quality and to command a higher price than other kinds. On account of the nearness of the Alps some protection must be given the trees during the winter months. For this purpose the gardens are first of all enclosed on the north, east, and west by walls of considerable height, leaving only the southern exposure open. Within these walls terraces are constructed, and upon them are planted the lemon-trees. At regular intervals tall stone pillars rise from among the



LEMON PLANTATIONS ON LAKE GARDA



## *Salo*

trees, and these during the winter are covered over with wooden cross-beams and boards, so as to extemporize roofs for the lemon-trees beneath. These gardens are often built directly against the steep mountainsides, thus obviating the necessity of a wall at the back. In the middle of the day the roofs are frequently raised to admit the winter sunshine.

The name of Salo is said to be derived from some layers of salt which were mined there in the early days of the Venetian Republic. It is to-day a busy town, having an interest in the silk industry, and it is connected with Brescia, the great silk-cocoon market, by a steam-tram.

As elsewhere, the washerwomen of Salo are much in evidence. The sun being hot at the time of the steamboat's visit, some of them have constructed little tent-like protections for their heads, and as the waves of the steamboat approach, they scatter and jump back from the water with much laughter. In the meantime, out in the open lake, some big barges lie becalmed, their tan-coloured sails set wing and wing.

Writing to her daughter, the Countess of Bute, on Oct. 17, 1749, Lady Mary Wortley

## *The Italian Lakes*

Montagu informs her: "I have been persuaded to go to a palace near Salo, situate on the vast lake of Gardia [*sic*], and do not repent my pains since my arrival, though I have passed a very bad road to it. It is indeed, take it all together, the first place I ever saw; the King of France has nothing so fine, nor can have in his situation." Lady Montagu describes the palace and grounds at some length. "It is seated," she writes, "in that part of the lake which forms an amphitheatre at the foot of a mountain near three miles high [*sic*] covered with a wood of orange, lemon, citron, and pomegranate trees, which is all cut into walks and divided into terraces, that you may go into a several garden from every floor in the house, diversified with fountains, cascades, and statues, and joined by easy marble staircases which lead from one to another. There are many covered walks, where you are secure from the sun in the hottest part of the day, by the shade of the orange-trees, which are so loaded with fruit, you can hardly have any notion of their beauty without seeing them: they are as large as lime-trees in England." She informs us that the palace was directly upon the water, and "was built by the great



## *The Riviera*

Cosmo, Duke of Florence," and speaks of Lady Orford as able to give her daughter "some knowledge of it, having passed the last six months" in Salo. Writing to her daughter Oct. 25, 1749, she states: "Three from hence is the little town of Maderna [Maderno], where the last Duke of Mantua built a retreat worthy a sovereign."

Great changes have taken place hereabouts since the residence of the sprightly letter-writer upon the shores of Lake Garda in the eighteenth century. It might be a matter of some difficulty now to identify the "palace" of the Duke of Florence or Tuscany and the "retreat" of the Duke of Mantua, for the devastating days of the French Revolution succeeded Lady Montagu's visit, and a destroying whirlwind passed that way.

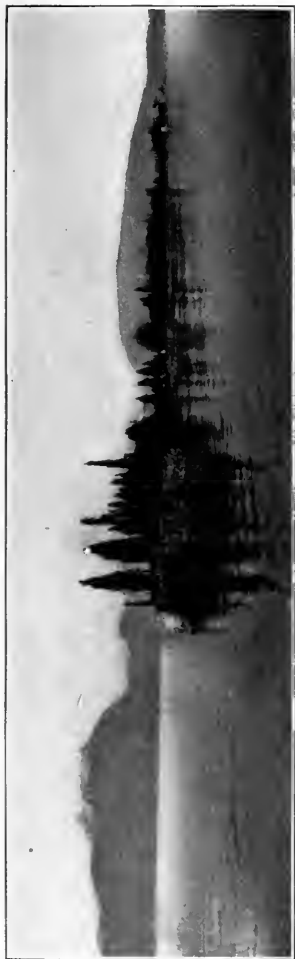
### *The Riviera (Gardone — Gargnano)*

At Gardone, though the assortment of colours may not be as lavish and profuse as at Salo, yet the lemon culture is still more pronounced and picturesque. It forms a novel picture which can hardly be likened to any other method of plant or tree cultivation. Tier on tier the white pillars of the

## *The Italian Lakes*

lemon plantations rise upon the hillsides at the back, with olive-trees and peach-trees interspersed among them. Some beautiful villas give the place distinction and special attractiveness. Indeed the stretch of shore from Gardone past Fasano and Maderno to Gargnano is specially designated as the Riviera on account of its sheltered sunny aspect and luxuriant fertility. Here are numerous hotels and *pensions* for those who choose to frequent these places as autumn and winter resorts. The Germans have greatly helped to make this region comfortable and suitable for a longer sojourn. Many cypresses stand guard over this favoured lakeside, like silent sentinels watching over it from rock and water-front; the gardens, too, are rich in myrtle, camellias, magnolias, and palms. There are many shorter and longer walks with excursions in the back country, while the steam-tram on the lake-front brings this Garda Riviera into touch with Brescia and thus with the great world outside.

The name of Maderno would seem to be a corruption of the Latin *Maternum*, and in truth the shores of Lake Garda furnish many proofs of Roman settlement, judging



ISOLA DI GARDA (ISOLA LACCHI)



THE RIVIERA



## *The Cliffs of Tremosine*

by the number of inscriptions which have been found at various points. Wealthy Roman families seem to have had their villas especially on this west side. The steamboat passes Toscolano, Cecina, and Bogliaco, and stops at the large village of Gargnano, notable both for its terraces of lemon plantations and also for the good fishing which brings its inhabitants a tidy sum annually. The mountains at the back contain much marble, and in general their rock formations are of interest to geologists.

## *The Cliffs of Tremosine*

After Gargnano a marked change makes itself felt in the lake scenery. The Riviera stops. There is a drawing together and a stretching up of the mountains. The water deepens in colour at the same time as the heights grow loftier, and the transition from the lowlands at Desenzano to the rugged heights at Riva has begun in good earnest. The steamboat rounds a vast cliff, standing in the water like the side-post of some titanic gate, and the feeling of the Alps is once more upon us. This impression is heightened by the sight of a hawk sailing at ease along the

## *The Italian Lakes*

precipices. The lake takes on a prodigious aspect, the shores assume a fierce and ominous nature. We stop at the foot of steep cliffs to take on some passengers who have climbed down from strange villages, perched out of sight upon the highlands at the back. We come to Campione, and then stop again at a house or two which serve as a landing-place for the village of Tremosine, lying far above the lake. A wire stretched from the top of the cliffs to the shore is used to slide down packages and bundles. The passengers who disembark for Tremosine are seen climbing up to the village by a wonderful staircase path, hardly discernible along the mountain wall. Over against Tremosine, on the eastern shore of the lake, the castle tower of Malcesine shows distinctly. Goethe once tried to sketch it, — but thereby hangs a tale, which shall be told in its proper place.

Thus coasting and skirting the great rocky plateau, streaked in barbaric reds and yellows, we reach Limone situated in a little bay. The prominent lemon plantations of the place would seem to have given it the name Limone, but we are assured on the contrary that the place has given the fruit its name, Limone being the first place in

## *The Cliffs of Tremosine*

Europe where lemons were grown. Goethe saw the plantations in 1786 and described them accurately, as set forth in the chapter entitled "Goethe on Lake Garda." It was at Limone that the French transferred Andreas Hofer to a boat on his way from Bozen to his execution in Mantua.

Lying ensconced in the shadow of the great cliffs, like predatory sharks at sea, or pike in a country pond, the sharp-nosed vessels of the Italian customs navy watch for smugglers. A veritable flotilla lies at anchor in the harbour of Limone, for the Austrian frontier is but a short distance up, the exact spot being marked by a column on the shore. At night these scouts keep their search-lights playing upon the mountain flanks to right and left as though in war-time. Some long buildings at Ustecchio and a fort farther on enhance the warlike appearance of this coast. Presently the imaginary line constituting the frontier is crossed. The entrance to the Ledro Valley, with the handsome Ponale waterfall, is passed. A rock-cut road of tunnels and galleries appears high up along the abrupt cliff crowned by wild towers, and there at the end of the lake, comfortably sheltered in a pleasant cor-

## *The Italian Lakes*

ner, lies a substantial little town, unsurpassed upon the Italian lakes for grace and charm, for quiet neatness and homelike beauty, — Riva, situated politically in the Crownland Tyrol, and actually representing Austria's only remaining urban foothold upon an Italian lake.





THE CLIFFS OF TREMOSINE



LIMONE, AND THE ITALIAN CUSTOMS VESSELS



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### RIVA

THIS little lakeside city is quite unique, not comparable to any of the towns or cities on the Italian lakes already described. Its atmosphere is Italian, its background alpine, its government Teutonic; immensely picturesque, it is yet well-ordered and serious; romantic, yet demure and dignified to a degree. The prevailing mood of Riva is like that of Lake Garda itself, a little serious and earnest. Over against Como, voluble and sparkling, Riva seems subdued and in the grasp of its stupendous surroundings. For travellers from the north who have need of withdrawing at times and being left to themselves, Riva comes as a welcome home, a cosy resting-place, whence beauty can be admired at leisure.

The picture of Riva from the lake approach is one not to be forgotten. The water-front of grand hotels and stately gar-

## *The Italian Lakes*

dens upon the east, the miniature city, compact and strong, upon the west, the tower of a ruined castle upon the hillside, and the overtopping height of Monte Giumella combine in a rare manner for a noble effect.

The steamboat lands at a pier which leads up to the station of the narrow gauge line for Arco and Mori. There is another landing in the harbour proper, the latter being generally filled with picturesque sailing-vessels, called *barche*, and fishing or pleasure boats of smaller size. The houses facing the harbour on the north side stand upon arcades of great age, ascribed to the time of the Scaligeri. Near by is an open space used as a market. Everywhere an appearance of great solidity of construction makes itself manifest. Riva, situated at the head of the lake and acting as one of the portals to the Alps, has always had considerable commerce. Agricultural products from the great plain of Lombardy were at one time largely brought up the lake and exchanged for the mineral wealth of the mountains. By reason of its excellent harbour and its warm climate, it used to be called both the Genoa and the Nice of the Principality of Trent while that principality lasted. At present Riva is no



RIVA, GENERAL VIEW



RIVA, THE HARBOUR



## *Riva*

longer on the direct line of transalpine traffic, which now passes almost exclusively up the Adige Valley from Verona to Trent.

A substantial municipal building bounds the market-place on the west; on the eastern side stands a massive clock tower, square and powerful of aspect, called the Aponale, upon which an angel blowing a trumpet acts as weather-vane. Farther east comes the crenelated fortress of La Rocca, surrounded by a moat and used as barracks. A street lined with palms and magnolias, indicative of the genial climate of Riva, leads to the station of the Arco-Mori line. Here and there a loggia or a fig-tree against the wall confirms the southern character of Riva, while on the other hand, it is here also that the traveller, making his way north from Italy, begins to hear much German spoken among the visitors, generally that Austrian-German which is so delightful in its rhythm and kindly diminutives. The native population, however, speaks Italian, as throughout the rest of Trentino. The tall official cap of Austria is much in evidence on the heads of the military and customs-house officers, and Austrian politeness is heard in the common speech. A frequent word of address in this

## *The Italian Lakes*

region is "*favorisco*" or "*reverisco*," while often the term "*complimenti*" is used. Indeed, there is no little courteous formality among this hospitable people.

Safely ensconced for a stay in one of the delightful hotels of Riva, the traveller has the prospect of many happy hours. The day passes in a series of panoramic pictures.

At dawn the twitter of countless birds induces you to throw open your window and to look out upon the garden full of azaleas and orange-trees in bloom. The birds are calling and singing before the heat of the day. They, like the hotel guests, are travellers seeking perennial spring in their flights from zone to zone. Under the window the great waxen blossoms of the magnolia-trees are discernible in the half-light, and the wistaria blooms on the garden arbour. The mystery of the morning hour is abroad. There is a sighing of branches, for the north wind which blows through the night is still upon the lake, and a little boat is seen scudding before it, wing and wing, along the rocky wall beyond Ponale. Near by the water gives the appearance of being pale green, farther off it merges by degrees into a transitional green-blue, a peacock-blue which,





RIVA, HOTEL TERRACE



## *Riva*

farther off still, becomes any blue you like and every blue you can imagine, up to the final streak, which is distinctly ultramarine, intense and sharp, closing the argument.

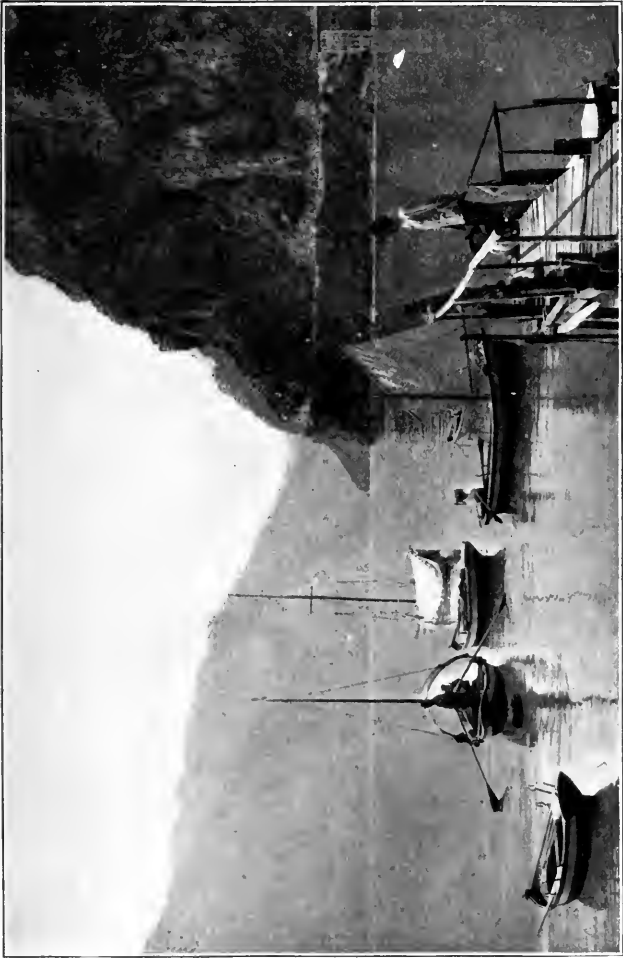
By nine o'clock we are seated under the horse-chestnut-trees in the direction of the Ponale road, watching the life of the harbour.

The night wind has now entirely ceased, the lake looks glazed as far as the eye can reach. The sails of some pleasure-boats hang limp at their masts. Even the gentle atmosphere of Riva, however, cannot subdue the washerwomen on the quay, scrubbing frantically. Here laborious Italy asserts itself. The unclouded sun visibly dries the clothes on the lines, but the women will not leave their tasks till the work is finished. Besides, they are expecting prompt relief from the heat; in the meantime, the dancing reflections in the water play upon their faces and make them screw up their eyes. Then they tie handkerchiefs upon their heads, but work on. The soap-suds float about in the blue. Under the glazed surface the water seems to be shot through with a web of reds, browns, and greens, creating a glitter as of changeable silk. This colour complex is the

## *The Italian Lakes*

reflection of the mountains, which colours seem to have sunk below the surface of the water and made of the lake a great opal.

We look up again. A pale blue line is stretching itself steadily in the direction of Torbole. Suddenly the line arrives in the harbour. The air freshens, and the washer-women look up from their task. The *ora* is here, the delightful fair-weather guest of Riva and of the hot Sarca valley, expected punctually at ten in the morning or at two in the afternoon, according to the time of year. Presently the pale blue line has painted the whole lake a rich dark blue, and some sailboats, which have been counting on the *ora* to make port, are seen to turn the Ponale corner and advance quickly on the home run, bellying their sails. By and by the Desenzano steamboat also arrives, and with it a further contingent of travellers to rejoice in Riva. This change of wind seems as fixed as the law of the Medes and Persians. It acts upon schedule time, and regulates both trade and pleasure jaunt. The people call the *ora* also simply the *aria*, and its opposite, the night wind, the *vento*. It is the *ora* which cools the hottest day and keeps green the luxuriant gardens of this



AT RIVA, JUST BEFORE THE *ORA* BEGINS TO BLOW

.....

## *Riva*

warm region. The air, though laden with the scent of exotic flowers, is pure through the presence of the mountains.

As the day progresses and the *ora* freshens, the lake grows deeper and deeper in colour, until the wind reaches its maximum strength; then comes a beautiful change, a mistiness produced by the air from the warm plain of Lombardy passing over the cool lake. This precipitation both softens the harsh outlines of the cliffs and smooths the frowns on the mountain faces. Under this benign influence Monte Giumella gleams less forbiddingly, and the terrific slant of Monte Baldo becomes a gentle slope. From the hotel terrace the clouds are seen sailing onward in a vague manner, melting and reforming to no purpose. There is the swish of wavelets against the parapets and the rustle of the trees in the garden.

In the afternoon the crack of musketry suddenly resounds from over by Monte Brione and reëchoes through the surrounding mountains. A company of Austrian sharpshooters are at their practice range. Later in the day there is the sound of the beating of the water with heavy oars, and two barges of custom-house guards dart out into the

## *The Italian Lakes*

lake. The men row standing, but splash a good deal, and the officer in charge shouts words of command. A few pleasure-boats are seen making the trip to the Ponale waterfall. A loud trumpet-call comes from the barracks at set of sun, and about this time the birds start up their evening twitter in the rose-bushes under the magnolia-trees. They seem to have much to say and are eager to say it, but when daylight finally fades entirely and the moon stands directly over Monte Giumella, only the nightingales continue to speak and pipe at rare intervals into the gleaming night. The stars peep over the shoulder of Monte Baldo, the search-lights from the Italian customs navy below Limone sweep the shores from end to end, rest for a moment upon upland meadows, where shepherds are sleeping beside their flocks, illumine the crevices in the cliffs and the dreary mountain paths which smugglers might follow, or peer into your room with vivid glare.

Little Riva is composing itself to rest, and under the glare of the moon continues to duplicate its outlines in the good lake which gives it both name and renown.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### GOETHE ON LAKE GARDA

IN the autumn of the year 1786 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe made his first trip to Italy. He drove over the Brenner Pass, bound for Verona, but instead of continuing all the way down the valley of the Adige, he branched off at Rovereto and drove over to Lake Garda by way of the Loppio Pass. Thus he set the fashion for subsequent tourists, who nowadays make this crossing by thousands every season, generally using the convenient narrow-gauge railroad from Mori to Arco and Riva for this purpose.

Goethe apparently did not visit Riva, but lodged at the inn in Torbole. In 1899 a delegate from the Goethe Society of Vienna, accompanied by an official of the district of Riva, visited Torbole for the purpose of determining the house in which the great poet must actually have lodged. Following the indications furnished by a pencil sketch made

## *The Italian Lakes*

by Goethe himself, the investigators decided that the house in question could have been none other than that of the brothers Alberti, standing on the small harbour-square of Torbole, for in Goethe's day this house was the only inn of the place and was called the "Inn to the Rose." The Goethe Society has since affixed a tablet to the house in commemoration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the poet's birth. It bears the following inscription: "*In questa casa dimoro Goethe il 12 Settembre, 1786. Heute hab ich an der Iphigenie gearbeitet, es ist im Angesichte des Sees gut von statten gegangen.*" ("In this house lodged Goethe on the 12th of September, 1786. To-day I have worked on the Iphigenie, it has progressed finely in sight of the lake.") The latter sentence is taken from Goethe's diary (*Tagebücher*). In a letter from Rome dated the 6th of January, 1787, he likewise states: "I drew the first lines of the new work on Lake Garda, as the powerful midday wind was driving the waves to the shore, where I was at least as solitary as my heroine on the coast of Tauris." In his "Italian Journey" there are some interesting letters descriptive of his impressions and experiences on Lake

## *Goethe on Lake Garda*

Garda. It must be remembered in this connection that on this trip he was making his first personal acquaintance with Italian life and scenery.

In a letter, dated "Torbole, the 12th of September, after dinner," we read:

"How much I wished to have my friends for a moment near me in order that they might rejoice over the view which lies before me.

"To-night I might have been in Verona, but there was still a glorious work of nature at my side, a precious spectacle, the Lake of Garda; I did not wish to miss it, and am gloriously rewarded for my *détour*. It was after five when I drove away from Roveredo [Rovereto], up a side valley which sends its waters into the Etsch [Adige]. When one reaches the top an enormous rock formation lies in front, over which it is necessary to go down to the lake. Here the most beautiful of limestone rocks exhibited themselves for artistic studies. When one reaches the bottom, there lies a little place at the northern end of the lake, with a small harbour, or, rather, a landing-place; it is called Torbole. Fig-trees had already frequently accompanied me on the way up, and as I

## *The Italian Lakes*

descended into the amphitheatre of rock, I found the first olive-trees full of olives. Here also for the first time I found the small pale figs as a common fruit which the Countess Lanthieri had promised.

“Out of the room in which I am sitting, a door leads into the court below; I have moved my table in front of it and sketched the view in a few lines. One overlooks the lake almost for its entire extent; only at the end on the left does it escape the eye. The shore, enclosed on both sides by hills and mountains, shines with countless villages. After midnight the wind blows from north to south; whoever wishes to go down the lake must start at this time; for already a few hours before sunrise the wind changes and blows toward the north. Now in the afternoon it is blowing strongly against me and cooling the warm sun very pleasantly. At the same time Volkmann teaches me that this lake was formerly called Benacus, and invites attention to a verse of Virgil in which it is mentioned: *Fluctibus et fremitu resonans Benace marino*. The first Latin verse of which the subject actually stands before me! At this moment, when the wind is constantly growing stronger and the lake is dash-

## *Goethe on Lake Garda*

ing ever higher waves against the landing-place, this verse is to-day still as true as it was many centuries ago. Much has changed, but the wind still storms over the lake, and its sight is still ennobled by a line of Virgil."

Goethe spent the night of the 12th of September at Torbole, and next morning early started down the lake by boat. The description of this trip is contained in a letter dated "Malcesine, the 13th of September, in the evening:"

"This morning early, at three o'clock, I left Torbole with the rowers. At first the wind was favourable, so that they could use the sails. The morning was glorious, though cloudy, and quiet at sunrise. We rowed past Limone, whose hill gardens, laid out in terraces and planted with lemon-trees, presented a rich and neat appearance. The whole garden consists of rows of square white pillars, which stand at regular distances from each other and rise up the mountain slope in steps. Over these pillars strong beams are laid in order during the winter to cover the trees which are planted between. The observation and examination of these pleasant objects was favoured by a slow trip, and so we had already passed Malcesine when the wind

## *The Italian Lakes*

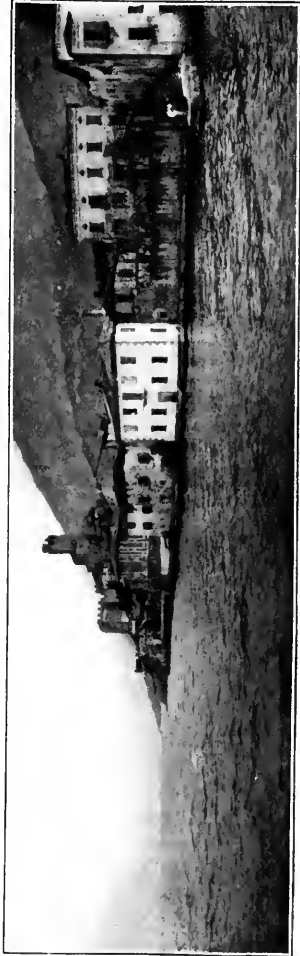
turned completely around, took its ordinary direction by day and blew toward the north. Rowing was of little use against the overwhelming power, and so we had to make a landing in the harbour of Malcesine. It is the first Venetian place on the eastern side of the lake. When one has to do with water, one cannot say: 'To-day I shall be here or there.' This sojourn I shall employ as best I may, especially in making a drawing of the castle which lies near the water and is a beautiful object. To-day in passing by I made a sketch of it."

The desire to sketch the castle of Malcesine led Goethe into an amusing adventure, which he relates at some length in a letter dated from Verona on the 14th of September.

It appears that he was quietly sketching the ruined castle the next morning when the people of the place began to crowd around him suspiciously, and a man among them suddenly seized the sketch and tore it in two. It must be remembered that at this time the Republic of Venice was still in existence, and that Malcesine was a frontier post against Austria on the north. The Podesta, the chief magistrate of the place, with his secretary, were both summoned by the peo-



FROM TORBOLE TO MALCESINE



MALCESINE





## *Goethe on Lake Garda*

ple. An amusing interrogatory forthwith took place, Goethe explaining that he was sketching the tower because it was a ruin. But, objected the Podesta, if it was a ruin, what was remarkable about it. Goethe set forth with much good humour the value which foreigners set upon ruins as objects of artistic interest. There was further discussion to and fro. Goethe was suspected of being a spy in the service of the Austrian emperor, sent to make drawings of the frontier defences of the Republic of Venice. Finally Goethe was led to declare himself a citizen of Frankfurt am Main. At the mention of this name a young woman exclaimed that the Podesta should call a certain Gregorio, who, it appeared, had been in employment in Frankfurt. Goethe soon satisfied the authorities of Malcesine that he spoke the truth, both by his first-hand knowledge of Frankfurt itself and also by describing to Gregorio certain people in Frankfurt, notably some mutual acquaintances among the Italian families settled there. As a result Goethe was given permission to go about at will over the whole place and visit its surroundings under Gregorio's guidance.

## *The Italian Lakes*

Goethe left Malcesine that night by boat, taking with him a basket of fine fruit from Gregorio's garden. He landed at Bardolino, a place on the eastern shore near the southern end of the lake, at 5 A. M., crossed over the mountains to Verona, and reached that city about one o'clock of the same day.

Thus Goethe's acquaintance with Lake Garda, though brief and hardly worthy of the name of sojourn, was yet full of zest, and is of special interest because it gave him his first introduction into the ways and means of Italy.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE EASTERN SHORE OF LAKE GARDA AND THE TOWER OF SAN MARTINO (SOLFERINO)

THE traveller on and about Lake Garda is constantly beset by the sight of a great tower rising from the plain somewhere between Desenzano and Peschiera and inland from the headland of Sermione. He cannot permanently escape this landmark as long as he tours around the lake, for it looms up in the open country with singular persistence and insistence. Sooner or later he will ask what it is, and the answer will be that it is the tower of San Martino, marking the site of the victory of the French and Italians over the Austrians in 1859. This battle is better known among English-speaking people as that of Solferino. A trip to the battle-field will take us down the eastern shore of Lake Garda and give us at least a passing acquaintance with the places on that side.

## *The Italian Lakes*

The first stop is at Torbole, crowded in its cosy corner between the range of Monte Baldo and the inflow of the Sarca River. Thence the steamboat skirts for many miles, at least until the town of Garda is reached, the bare, slanting strata of Monte Baldo, which rears its uncompromising sterility from the water's edge, a veritable desert of rock tipped at an angle, occupying the space between the lake and the valley of the Adige. Two tiny islands appear offshore near Malcesine and Castello, called Dell' Olivo and Tremelone respectively. Near Malcesine a few olive-trees full of wayward grace begin to clothe the baldness of the shore with a shimmer of silver-green punctuated and emphasized by rigid cypresses.

Malcesine itself decidedly invites the artist's pencil, as it did that of Goethe. Perched upon a rock which projects into the lake stands the square tower which tempted the poet, with adjoining building and wall, the whole complex being crenelated in true mediæval fashion. Alongside the houses of a village have grouped themselves around a natural harbour.

The steamboat journey southward from Malcesine presents a weird sameness, a pow-

## *The Eastern Shore of Lake Garda*

erful uniformity of aspect quite unlike the shifting scenes usual upon the Italian lakes. The great seriousness of Lake Garda and its large scale are constantly enhanced by the terrific range of Monte Baldo on the one hand and the blank wall of cliffs on the western shore. These natural features alone are quite sufficient to differentiate Lake Garda from the lesser lakes.

The stopping-places succeed each other at irregular intervals, all at the foot of Monte Baldo. Assenza, Macugnano, Castelletto di Brenzone, and Torri del Benaco, the very names frequently indicating the presence of castles or towers. The headland of San Vigilio, exposed and rocky, is deeply impressive, with a certain remote and neglected air. Here again the olive-trees dispute the meagre ground with each other, and in so doing form delightful groups. The rich green cypresses are reflected in the mirror of the lake, and the rocks cast deep purple shadows. Here a villa looking forsaken and forlorn, there a lively little harbour, add their pictures to this bizarre lake-shore.

The steamboat, speeding on its way, now enters the sheltered bay of the old town of Garda, which has given its name to the whole

## *The Italian Lakes*

lake. A ruined castle has been used to make a background for a lemon plantation and for a vineyard surrounded by an incongruous red brick wall. Now we pass a large cream-coloured villa, green as to its blinds, and situated upon a terrace surrounded by decorative grounds. Then the boat stops at a place given over to fishing. The beach is covered with long white nets drying or being mended. Rows of huge bottle-shaped receptacles of wickerwork repose on the breakwater, making one think of the lobster-pots of the New England coast. The harbour is full of fishing-boats, which are black and rise to antiquated points at the bow and stern, suggesting primitive gondolas. Indeed, the influence of Venice is noticeable far and wide about Lake Garda, even at this late day. Women still go to the lake with copper buckets slung over their shoulders on long wooden yokes, as their sisters go to the small piazza fountains of Venice.

We pass Bardolino, where Goethe landed in 1786 to continue his journey to Verona.

Lasize has its fine old castle and garden. Indeed, Lake Garda is of martial aspect, bordered by characteristic square structures of massive mediæval architecture. Then

## *The Tower of San Martino*

comes Peschiera at the outlet of the Mincio, once a famous fortress of the Quadrilateral, but to-day apparently counted of small strategic value. The place presents little of interest upon the water-front. Before you are fully aware of its military character, the boat has entered a fortified harbour of small dimensions but most warlike appearance. Whichever way the traveller turns, his eye falls on bastions, moats, and masonry. Even the casual visitor, however, cannot fail to see that these are of a pattern which long-range guns and smokeless powder have now made obsolete. The Mincio is not navigable at the Peschiera outlet on account of weirs.

### *The Tower of San Martino (Solferino)*

The battle-field and tower of San Martino can be reached from Peschiera by rail. On the 24th of June there is always a large gathering of country people and military associations from far and near.

In that famous battle the French and Piedmontese stood under Napoleon III. and Victor Emmanuel respectively, the Austrians under the Emperor Francis Joseph. The

## *The Italian Lakes*

number of men engaged is said to have been 150,000 on each side.

On the evening of June 23, 1859, the whole Austrian army sallied forth from Verona and Mantua, recrossed the Mincio, and occupied a line of battle some twelve miles long, with Solferino as a centre. The village of Solferino lies some five miles south of the San Martino tower. Next morning early the French began the attack on the Austrians along this line and were victorious. A row of hills afforded valuable shelter for the combatants. At the same time the position of San Martino was attacked by the Piedmontese and fell into their hands at nightfall. The monumental tower which marks the site of San Martino and is visible even from Austrian territory does not disappoint on nearer acquaintance. It is truly enormous. Instead of steps, the interior reveals a series of inclined planes which mount to the top, and frescoes on the interior walls tell the tale of the great struggle for Italian independence. In the rotunda on the ground floor Napoleon III. is seen riding side by side with Victor Emmanuel, and, in general, due regard is given in the different frescoes to the share of the French in the work of that



## *The Tower of San Martino*

fateful day. The battle-ground covers a stretch of hilly country, displaying the general characteristics of the plain of Lombardy, where rows of mulberry-trees alternate with fields of American corn and pleasant vineyards. The peace of work well done has now displaced the havoc of war. The former Italian and Austrian combatants have since become allies, and their contiguous territories along a wavering line of great extent resound to-day with the hum of useful, mutually beneficial industries.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### ENVIRONS AND EXCURSIONS

#### *Arco*

IMAGINE an isolated yellow rock rising some 430 feet sheer from the Sarca plain, clothed as to its base with the pearl-gray foliage of olive-trees, higher up bristling with the dark points of many cypresses, and the whole surmounted by castle towers in partial ruin. Spread for yourself at the foot of this extraordinary castle hill several streets of houses in a semicircle, some handsome hotels, gardens, and shaded walks, — and you have a rough sketch of Arco, as it looms up before the visitor approaching from Riva. North of Riva the river Sarca has deposited an alluvial plain of exceptional fertility. Roses are found here by the thousands, even in December. The almonds ripen in February, the peaches, apricots, and pears in March. It is out of this flat plain that the



ARCO AND ITS CASTLE



## *Environs and Excursions*

castle hill of Arco juts forth like some ante-diluvian marine monster raising its head above the surface of the placid sea.

The great rock is so situated that its strategic value must have engaged the attention of any race wishing to fortify its settlements in this region. The actual building of the castle has been variously ascribed to the Romans and to Theodoric the Great, king of the Goths. It is certain that it finally became the home of the Counts of Arco, and was partially ruined in 1703 at the time of the French invasion, during the War of the Spanish Succession.

The hotels of Arco are especially designed for winter patronage, some of them possessing covered promenades and sunny garden terraces. There is an avenue of magnolias, a casino, a grand villa belonging to the Austrian Archduke Frederick, and a town palace of the Arco family. The trees planted along the favourite walks are illuminated at night with electric lights ingeniously placed between them. From the standpoint of its sheltered situation Arco may be likened to one of those lemon plantations on Lake Garda, which are protected on the north, east, and west by walls, and open to the south

## *The Italian Lakes*

only. That which is done artificially for the lemon-trees on the banks of Lake Garda, nature has done unsolicited for the houses of Arco. The place is in some respects a miniature Nice or Algiers. Many guests crowd its hotels during the season, mostly speaking German, and bringing with them the good graces and pleasant ways of Vienna and Berlin.

Arco and Riva combined form admirable centres for excursions in all directions by land and water, down along the valleys or up into the heights. The region is not exactly conspicuous for short strolls, although some such have been laid out at Arco. The country lying around the upper part of Lake Garda is built upon too large a scale, and is preëminently a land of magnificent distances. It is far removed from mere prettiness.

Riva the town proper receives the shade in the afternoon from towering Monte Giu-mella;—doubtless for this reason the superb hotels (which are designed to meet the needs principally of autumn and winter guests) stretch out eastward along the lake, in order to enjoy as much of the sunshine as possible.

## *Environs and Excursions*

An interesting excursion from Riva consists of a visit to the Ponale waterfall. This object of scenic beauty may be reached by boat, and, with a little forethought, the winds may be made to serve admirably for propelling power. Thus, if an early start is taken, the north wind can be used to sail south to the mouth of the Ponale gorge, the waterfall can be visited, and the *ora*, or south wind, can then be used for the return to Torbole or Riva. In connection with the Ponale waterfall excursion, it is possible to climb also to the high-placed hamlet of Pregasine, perched above the frowning cliffs that plunge straight down into the lake.

For the excursion to Lake Ledro we follow the interesting carriage road which is cut into the cliffs in the direction of the Ponale gorge. There are three galleries and tunnels. In the longest of these tunnels an inscription records that the road was built as long ago as 1851. As this superb bit of road-building rises gradually along the perpendicular mountainside, the view from it grows in extent over Lake Garda and the Sarca valley. One is reminded of the famous Axenstrasse on Lake Luzern, in Switzerland, and of portions of the no less beautiful road

## *The Italian Lakes*

along the northern shore of Lake Thun in that country. At the Ponale gorge the carriage road turns a sharp corner and winds inward to the valley of Ledro with its pretty little lake of clear green and its chief village, Pieve di Ledro. This highway may then be followed for many miles to Storo, in the Val Bona, and to the Italian Lago d'Idro, with its famous frontier fortifications at Rocca d'Anfo. Nor in the list of excursions from Riva should be forgotten little Varone with its gorge and waterfall.

As long as the visitor makes Riva or Arco his headquarters, he has before him the extraordinary mountain mass of Monte Baldo, already mentioned as separating Lake Garda from the valley of the Adige. This range extends from Torbole down to the town of Garda. After that it disintegrates gradually as far as Bardolino, and is succeeded by the pleasant hill country in which lie, in a wide curve, Lasize, Peschiera, Desenzano, San Martino, Solferino, and Salo. Monte Baldo forms a happy hunting-ground for geologist, botanist, and entomologist. The edelweiss is still to be found in its high places. Its two principal peaks are called respectively the Altissimo and Monte Maggiore. From



## *Environs and Excursions*

both views of exceptional extent can be obtained, linking into one superb whole the snow groups of Tyrol and the Dolomites, and bringing them to the very feet of Verona, *La Degna*, and Venice on the Adriatic.

Writing to his mother on May 21, 1869, from Verona, Ruskin said of the view of these mountains from the plain: "I had a sunset last night which convinced me that, after all, there is nothing so picture-like as the colour of the Italian landscape. There were some blue mountains beyond the Lago di Garda seen against the light, and they were of a blue exactly like the blue of paint, or of the bloom of a plum, a lovely plain, covered with vines and cypresses, being all round to the south and west, and soft lower slopes of Alp on the north. I never saw anything more heavenly."

Far to the north and west of Arco lie the majestic snow groups of the Brenta, the Pre-sanella, and the Adamello, marvellous arctic outcroppings amid this southern land of sunshine. For those who are bent on *high touring*, as the Germans have it, these groups afford great opportunities and not a few difficulties. Others will take profound interest in the Sarca valley, reduced to ruin for long

## *The Italian Lakes*

stretches by various landslips. From Arco it is possible to drive to Alle Sarche, and thence by Lake Toblino, with its island castle, over the Buco di Vela to Trent. Or else, turning eastward from Alle Sarche, the traveller can reach Tione, Pinzolo, and charming Madonna di Campiglio. These names evoke grand possibilities in a region still largely off the beaten track, but they hardly belong to the subject here being considered, namely, the Italian lakes. Suffice it at this point to confine our excursions to the environs of Riva and Arco, to glory in the exceptional beauties of this corner of earth, to admire the thrift of its inhabitants, noticeable not only in the fertile Sarca plain, but also among the barren rocks where mulberry-trees are planted for the silkworms upon every available spot, even amid the devastations and desolations caused by pre-historic crumblings of mountain masses.

The country to the north has already been treated by the author in "The Fair Land Tyrol."

## CHAPTER XXXII

GIOVANNI SEGANTINI (1858 - 99)

### *Painter of the Alps*

THE name of Arco recalls the career of a man of the mountains, whose longing and endeavour taught him both to understand and then to paint the Alps and their inhabitants, as they are, in season and out of season. In his pictures we find a workaday alpine world, illuminated by his genius. He depicts the men, women, and children of the heights, the sheep and the goats, the cattle and horses of the uplands. He lays his scenes in the stable or on the pasture, on the *alp* or *alm*, and round about in his pictures the mountain ranges, the precipitous peaks, and the great snow giants stand guard. He has given us the exalted simplicity and power of the Alps, and withal the intimate, naïve, and elemental life of those who make their living off the slopes and in the secluded valleys.

## *The Italian Lakes*

To follow Segantini's artistic career is to journey over a good portion of the southern slope of the Alps and their approaches, starting on Austrian soil, then turning to Italy, and ending in Switzerland. In a certain sense, therefore, a description of his life and work forms a fitting climax to this volume, devoted to the subalpine lake region.

It was in Arco that Segantini was born, but his career rises in an ascending scale from the lowlands into the highlands, from the plains at the foot of the Alps by slow stages into the heights themselves, there to dwell until the end of his artistic mission. Step by step he won his way, first from the city atmosphere of Milan, whither he was taken in early childhood, from an atmosphere heavy laden with the friction of a great population, to the rural country of the Brianza, resting snugly among the alpine fore-hills. Then he climbed into a valley of the Swiss Canton of Graubünden, and for years painted what he saw there from the world apart, while his fame spread over Europe. Finally he rose to the upland plateau of the upper Engadine, and there, at the very edge of its loftiest portion, at far-famed Maloja, about on the limit of the

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habitable portion of the Alps, he brought his art and his intimate conceptions to their climax and culmination.

Thus he knew the Alps in all their gradations, summering and wintering in them and with them, and loved their every characteristic and feature. For him their solitudes were not lonesome, but filled with thought. He understood the lives of the people and rejoiced with them. The flowers were his companions. The mountain torrents spoke and he answered.

It may occur to some one to institute a comparison between this Italian interpreter of the Alps and Defregger, of Teutonic Tyrolese stock, because they both painted in the alpine highlands. In reality these two artists have little in common, except the environment of their work. Defregger is pre-eminently the painter of the alpine anecdote, or historical incident, the painter of a people of German race, first and foremost, his landscape is always incidental, his method is that of the academies in which he studied, his temperament is spontaneously joyous, and his work almost invariably happy and bright. Segantini is a great master of landscape and of the symbolical interpretation of the Alps,

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as well as a noble genre painter. He rarely breaks the predominant sense of sobriety and earnestness in his pictures. His human figures often assume complete subordination even to the cattle and to their mountain surroundings. Men and women sometimes appear in his pictures as mere specks in the vast amphitheatre of an alpine basin. Moreover, Segantini broke away from the traditions of his academic schooling, both in method and in choice of subjects, and his fame rests upon a totally different basis from that of his neighbour in the northern Alps.

Segantini has left some fragmentary autobiographical data in letters and elsewhere, from which it is possible to gather a few salient facts about his youth and early struggles. His mother died when he was five years old, and his father then left Arco and took the child with him to Milan. There was a son and daughter of a former marriage, and the four for awhile made up the household in the city. But the business in which father and son were engaged failed, and they soon moved away, leaving little Giovanni in the care of his stepsister. As the stepsister was away all day at work, the child remained much alone at home, and,

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for fear that harm might come to him, he was kept in what proved to be virtual imprisonment. The child was sensitive and imaginative, and suffered greatly from this confinement in cheerless surroundings, according to Segantini's own naïve recital of these early days.

He must have been about seven years of age when, one day, hearing persons speak of some one who had gone to France from Milan, the little fellow decided to run away. He was found outside of the city by the roadside at night, wet through from a rain-storm, and was cared for by kindly peasant folk. As he refused to return to his stepsister, these people allowed him to remain with them for several months, herding their swine and geese. At the end of that time his stepsister found him, and he temporarily returned with her to Milan.

Soon, however, he was sent to live with the stepbrother, who was keeping a sausage shop in the Val Sugana, off from Trent in Tyrol. There Giovanni remained for a few years, but eventually he made an attempt to run away from the stepbrother also, and only returned to him through the failure of his plans for getting out into the wide,

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wide world beyond. Then the boy was sent back to Milan, and at the age of about twelve was placed in an institution for orphaned and homeless children. From that institution he made his third and last attempt to run away, but was brought back, and at the age of fifteen was finally graduated to make his own way in the world.

His stepsister now apprenticed him to a photographer and painter of transparencies and banners, so that he might begin to make use of the talent for drawing, of which he had already given evidence in the orphan home. At the same time he began to visit the Art Academy attached to the famous Brera Gallery in Milan. His work showed originality, and by degrees excited much comment on the part both of students and teachers. He even received some prize medals from the Academy competitions, but at the end of his second year of study his work had aroused so much partisanship that it was pronounced revolutionary, and his picture for the year having been badly hung at the prize exhibition, he left the Academy, feeling himself misunderstood and aggrieved.

Years of bitter struggle followed, during which he barely made a living by a little



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teaching and was obliged to resort to small loans from friends.

In his twentieth year he exhibited a painting of the ancient choir of the Church of San Antonio in Milan, which won instant recognition as a work of merit in the treatment of light effects. Segantini's former schoolmates at the Academy, remembering his hardships, raised a purse and bought the picture of him for three hundred (300) lire.

Segantini now set up a studio for himself near the Brera, painted what he saw from his window or on the street, and also gained access to an anatomical clinic, where he studied the human body. From this period dates a picture which throws light on a profound ethical characteristic of his genius. With his newly acquired knowledge of anatomy he painted the picture of a woman in the last stages of consumption. It was a death-bed scene. But later, in what was doubtless an involuntary revulsion against such a portrayal and against the perpetuation of such suggestions of disease, Segantini painted the picture over again and changed the dying patient into a fresh and

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healthy person just awakening from sleep, and renamed the picture "Rose-leaf."

In 1881, when Segantini had reached the age of twenty-three, he married, and then started on that wonderful up-hill journey of growth and development which was to take him by degrees from Milan to Maloja, through eighteen years of ripening experience and work, and place him on the pinnacle of artistic fame among the great modern painters.

His first step was into the Brianza, into the pastoral region already described in this book, which thrusts itself forward to a point between the two arms of Lake Como. Segantini spent about five years in this region, painting principally its sheep and horses and the peasants at labour. For more than a year he lived at Pusiano, a hamlet on the borders of the little lake of the same name and on the edge of the hills. Then he took a step upward to Corneno, just above Pusiano, whence the view stretches over the lowlands. Here he remained another two years and a half. It was during his Brianza period that Segantini first made the acquaintance of Millet's work. Some photographs were shown him during a visit to Milan; he never

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saw the originals, and instantly he recognized a kindred artist. The effect upon Segantini was instantaneous, not in the way of blind imitation, but in awakening him to his own capabilities and possibilities. There was much in the personal history and in the aspirations of these two great artists which made them one, although they never met. During this period also Segantini saw some reproductions of pictures of the Dutch school, which likewise acted as an incentive to him and revealed to him something of the general European drift in the great art world outside, with which he had no actual contact.

In 1885 Segantini took another step upward, fraught with the most important results to his artistic career.

The carriage road which bisects the region of the Brianza from Erba to Bellagio mounts through the Val Assina. About half-way between these two places, after passing the considerable village of Canzo, it is possible to make your way to a mountain hamlet by the name of Caglio. Here Segantini lived for some six months and painted the great picture which may be said to mark his entrance upon that world-wide appreciation

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which his work has now acquired. Judging by the increasing number of monographs devoted to him, and the constantly growing value set on his pictures, his reputation is still steadily rising.

It is interesting to note that the first official European honours conferred upon Segantini, apart from the little episode in Milan, came from Holland. Both in 1883 and 1886 he received the gold medal from Amsterdam, and most of his later works went across the Alps, especially to Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. But in Caglio he painted a picture which his own country was proud to recognize as a masterpiece.

In 1888 the Italian government bought his "Alla Stagna," "At the Milking Bar," which then went to the National Museum in Rome. This picture represents a mountain pasture at eventide, upon which a herd of cows is distributed at several milking bars or fences. The close-cropped pasture stretches off into a distance closed by low hills. We are evidently not in the high Alps yet, but the herd of cattle indicates that we have risen to the pasture-lands. The evening sun shines benignly over the scene. There are some women to milk the cows, but tech-

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nically they stand in a subordinate position to the cattle, and the latter, in a great variety of pose and colour, dominate the scene.

In the summer of 1886 Segantini, with his wife and children, moved up higher and farther into the alpine world to a little village called Savognin in the Canton Graubünden, Switzerland. This village is on the road which passes from Tiefenkastel to St. Moritz over the Julier Pass, and is situated in the valley called Oberhalbstein. The place is not quite four thousand feet above the level of the sea and is a characteristic alpine settlement, not exceptional in any way, and at that time quite untouched by resident tourists. Here the Segantini family lived for eight years, during which time the artist's pictures were being shown in various art centres of Europe. In 1888 a collection of his pictures was exhibited in London, in 1889 he exhibited at the Paris Exposition of that year.

It was at Savognin and in its surroundings that Segantini at last reached the true alpine atmosphere, for which he seems always inwardly to have yearned, and which henceforth made him the great scenic interpreter of this upper world to mankind at large.

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The total number of Segantini's pictures is very large, considering the shortness of his artistic life. Official figures, though avowedly incomplete, place his oil paintings at 132 and his sketches and pastels at 108.

Among the many works which have contributed to earn him the title of the Painter of the Alps, the following may be enumerated as special examples, though no claim is made that this list is in any sense complete:

“Knitting Girl at the Fence” shows a girl sitting on the ground beside a fence and deeply absorbed in the stitches of her knitting, while a few sheep stand quietly beside her. Through the bars of the fence there is a view of the village of Savognin beyond. The scene is just such as any traveller might see for himself in Graubünden. The very absence of the extraordinary or sensational gives this picture a special impressiveness. The whole is full of rest and alpine stillness.

“The Two Mothers” represents a stable scene in which we discern a cow at the stall with her calf and a sitting woman with a baby in arms. A lantern hangs from the ceiling and sheds a strong light upon the woman's face.

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A picture entitled "Yoked Cows," and now to be found in Zürich, in the Henneberg Gallery, takes us into the open air. Two cows are yoked to a rude cart. They stand before a mountain water-trough, made alpine-fashion from the trunk of a tree. The girl who has been driving the cows is now herself drinking with lowered head from the wooden spout of the fountain. In the middle distance is seen a village, and some snow-covered mountains, though not "snow mountains," fill out the background.

One of Segantini's best-known pictures is "The Furrow," also called "Ploughing in the Alps." This painting is now in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich. It received the gold medal at the Turin Exhibition in 1892. In some respects "The Furrow" strongly recalls Millet's work, but this resemblance would not seem to proceed from any imitation, but from a certain natural similarity in the point of view, if not in the workmanship of the two great painters. We are introduced to an upland valley, probably that of Savognin. In the foreground two men are seen ploughing with two horses. The furrows and the bare ground, where the sod has been overturned, stretch back in

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a curving line. Again there is a village in the middle ground, characterized by the usual alpine architecture, part wood, part stone and mortar, the roofs sloping so as to shed the winter snow, and a church spire rising from their midst. The background is formed by mountain ranges, similar to those in the picture entitled "Yoked Cows," *i. e.* ranges which are still partly covered with snow during the months of April and May, but are bare of snow during the summer. No one who is acquainted with the Alps all the year round, and not merely during the short tourist season, can fail to be impressed with Segantini's fidelity and clearness on all points, born of an intimate knowledge and love of the mountains and of accurate observation at all times and seasons.

"Alpine Pasture," now in Vienna in private hands, is an idyl of special charm to those who love the upper solitudes above the timber line. We find ourselves on a real *alp* or *alm* of wide extent. A shepherd boy sits on a rock in the foreground; near him a number of shorn sheep graze or gaze vacantly into the distance. In the middle ground, down in the hollow, lies a small alpine lake, hardly more than a pond, on



## *Giovanni Segantini*

the borders of which the figures of some more sheep and also of a herd of cattle appear somewhat indistinctly. Three men are tending the animals. Bare, rugged mountains close in the scene, and an occasional snow peak or slope gleams in the far distance. A great quiet reigns over the stony pasture, an aloofness from the world makes itself felt. No one could have painted this picture who had not learned from actual experience, literally by heart, the alpine interplay of light and shade, the shifting colour-scheme of these lofty regions and their rare stillness, where, aside from the herds and flocks and the infrequent movements of their herders, only the wandering clouds, the nodding flowers, and the circling birds seem to express motion. Segantini certainly acquired this faculty of viewing the outside world from a distance, of looking off, and absorbing the meanings of alpine length and breadth and reproducing the impression of immovable immensity.

“Spring Pasture,” now in Zürich in the Henneberg Gallery, renders the summer pasture in the full glow of early sunshine. There is a white cow with the regulation bell hanging from her neck. Her calf is

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not far off. The grass stretches in great billows off to some superb mountain forms at the back. A straying cloud has caught on one of the summits and hangs there enveloping the peak in a dark mist. Two distant figures of women and the corner of an alpine hut supply the only human touch, and over the whole an atmosphere of spring-time joyousness holds undisputed sway.

“Haying Time” represents a familiar scene in Graubünden. In the foreground a girl is stooping low to scrape together every wisp of hay with her rake. This hay is to be carefully wrapped in bundles, as is seen in the middle ground, where a few women are loading such hay bundles upon a cart drawn by cows. A few jagged mountain figures loom up at the back.

The last phase in Segantini’s artistic development, his final climb into the heights, took him to Maloja in the upper Engadine. He went there in the summer of 1894 and took up his quarters in an ample Swiss chalet not very far from the borders of the Lake of Sils. Maloja is almost six thousand feet above the level of the sea, and is thus about as high as the line of the habitable portion of the Alps. Segantini could hardly have

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moved his home up higher with any profit to his work. Indeed he found it necessary at times to descend on the Italian side of the Maloja Pass to a place called Soglio in the Val Bregaglia. The climate of the upper Engadine is locally described as "nine months winter and three months cold," but during those three brilliant months Maloja and adjacent resorts are filled with guests from every quarter of the globe, making the region a veritable international rendezvous. Thus, if Segantini could not be induced to go out to meet the big world, that world came to him in the mountains.

The first large picture he painted at Maloja was entitled "Return to the Native Land," now in the National Gallery in Berlin. It tells the story of a family bringing the dead body of their son home on a cart for burial. A man leads the horse, while a woman sits mourning beside the bier. The horse and a dog which follows the cart both display the sadness of the hour by their drooping attitude. Segantini also painted numerous allegorical and symbolical pictures, generally using alpine backgrounds for his figures with novel effects, but a consid-

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eration of these works would take the reader somewhat outside the scope of this book.

A "Portrait of a German Lady," for example, in private possession in Berlin, sets forth a sitting figure with an alpine background of *alp*, cliff, and peak.

It was Segantini's special desire to produce a grand triptych to celebrate the Alpine world as a whole. It was to be a grand summary, an epic portrayal with the brush of the majesty of the mountains and the simple occupations of the alpine dwellers. The work in its entirety was never completed, but the three large paintings which were to form the basis of it were almost finished by the great artist before his death. These are entitled "Nature," "Life," and "Death."

"Nature," as Segantini left it, would probably have received a little more work at his hands had he lived, but to all intents and purposes it can be accepted as it stands. It is morning on the *alp* and the snow mountains stand round about in their full glory. In the left foreground are seen a mother and child sitting under a lofty cedar of the Alps (*pinus cembra*), that noble tree which, somewhat rare in other parts of Switzerland, occurs with greater frequency in the upper

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Engadine, as well as in Southern Tyrol and in such mountain regions as the Pyrenees, the Carpathians, and even in Southern Siberia. There is a small lake in the hollow of the alpine basin and cattle are grazing at its margin. A man with a stick is driving a cow before him. Two women enter the picture from the right middle distance, wending their way over a winding mountain path. The alp is still in the subdued light of early morning, but the rays of the sun strike with full force on the crags and snow slopes of the enclosing mountains beyond. There is an air of classic arrangement in this picture which makes it combine in one the Latin influence of the south and the Teutonic environment of the north. One would not be surprised to see a Greek temple rising there beside the great cedar of the Alps, to complete the welding of ancient art and alpine nature. This touch makes the picture reminiscent, almost symbolical in quality, and places it quite apart from paintings of the Alps by other artists. Indeed "Nature" is unique even among Segantini's own pictures. It is as though this Italian genius had comprehended and therein expressed in lasting form that modern love for the moun-

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tains which his countrymen are now experiencing, and which leads them to climb in ever-increasing numbers the abrupt southern slopes of the Alps in order mentally to make them their own.

“Life” is probably entirely finished. It forms a complete contrast to “Nature” in tone and thought, though the scene is again laid in the upland pasture-lands. The time is transferred to the set of sun. A man is driving the cattle home along a stony mountain path. Behind him comes a woman leading a calf by a rope, while the mother cow walks contentedly alongside. The landscape is of transcendent richness and splendour, and must immediately warm the heart of every true lover of the Alps. The eye is drawn over the familiar rock-strewn sward of the uplands, patched with brilliant green grass-plots, to a clear distance wherein is outlined a range of great mountains sparkling with everlasting snow. An all-enveloping yellow effulgence covers the western sky, in which a lone orange-tinted cloud floats quietly at ease. It is such a landscape as one may have seen returning at the end of some summer day from an ascent into the snow peaks above.

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“Death” was intended to complete this colossal trilogy, built upon the theme of the Alps, but the picture was never finished. As blocked out it represents a sombre winter scene. Deep snow lies everywhere, covering the land to the tops of the fences. The roofs of the houses are burdened with it. A little group of mourners stands near a house door. An ominous mountain range rises at the back, and a cloud coils around one of the peaks like volcano smoke.

In 1899 Segantini died at the Upper Schafberg Restaurant, a point over nine thousand feet above the level of the sea, situated above Pontresina in the upper Engadine. It is a favourite point of view, and there is now a tablet there in his memory. His grave is in the little cemetery of Maloja. One feels that the good painter, ever reaching higher, both in art and altitude, was able through years of single-minded endeavour to express to others by his brush some of the truth which he felt welling up in himself,—and so passed on to learn more and achieve even greater results in an ascending scale. In the meantime, wherever there are those who hear with memory’s ear the tinkling of cattle bells on upland pastures,

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the murmur of distant avalanches, the gurgle of little brooks across sunlit meadows; who see with mind's eye the white mountains exalted against an impenetrable azure and the tiny flowers wavering in the draught that draws between the crags; who, having experienced the peace of the high Alps, desire to give thanks,—in them Segantini has found enthusiastic friends whose affection time will not obliterate.

**THE END.**



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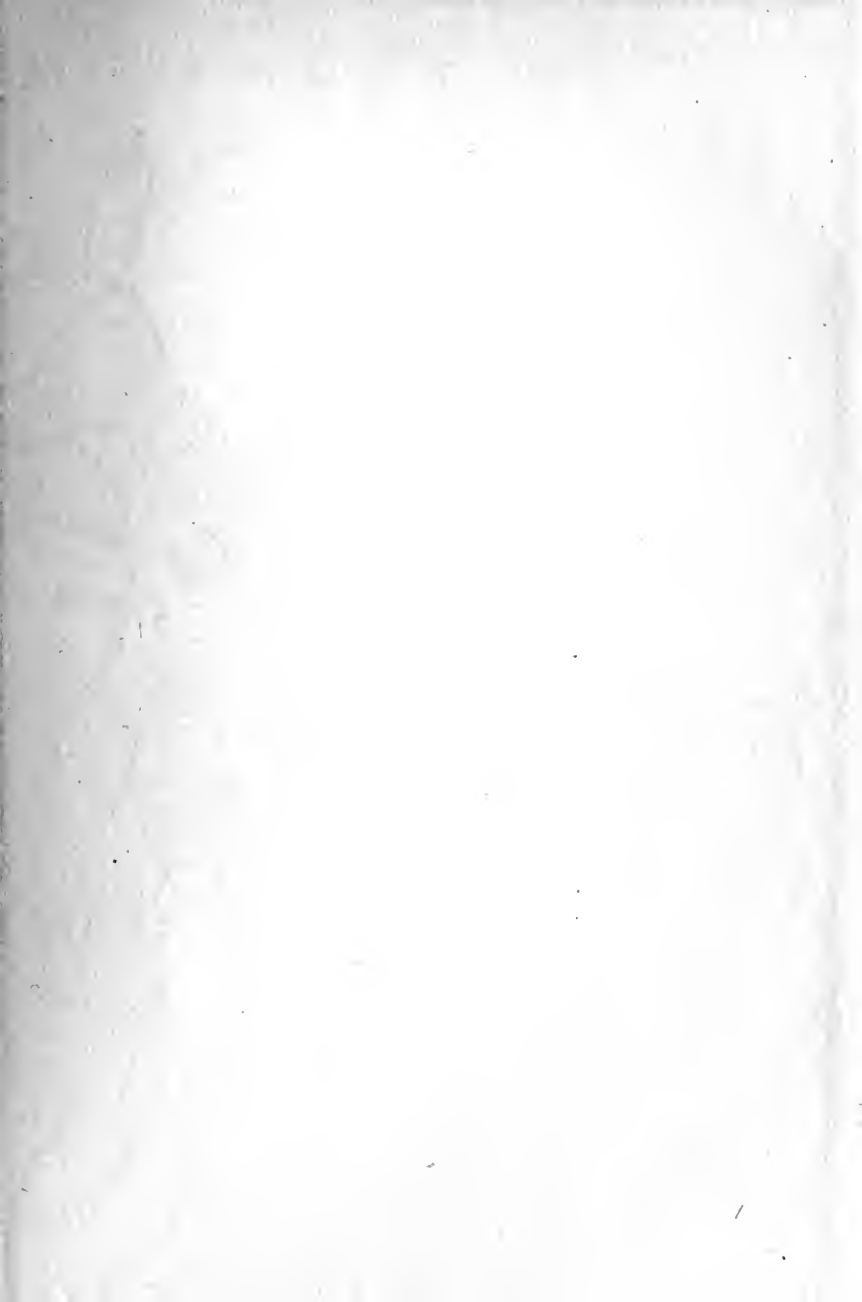
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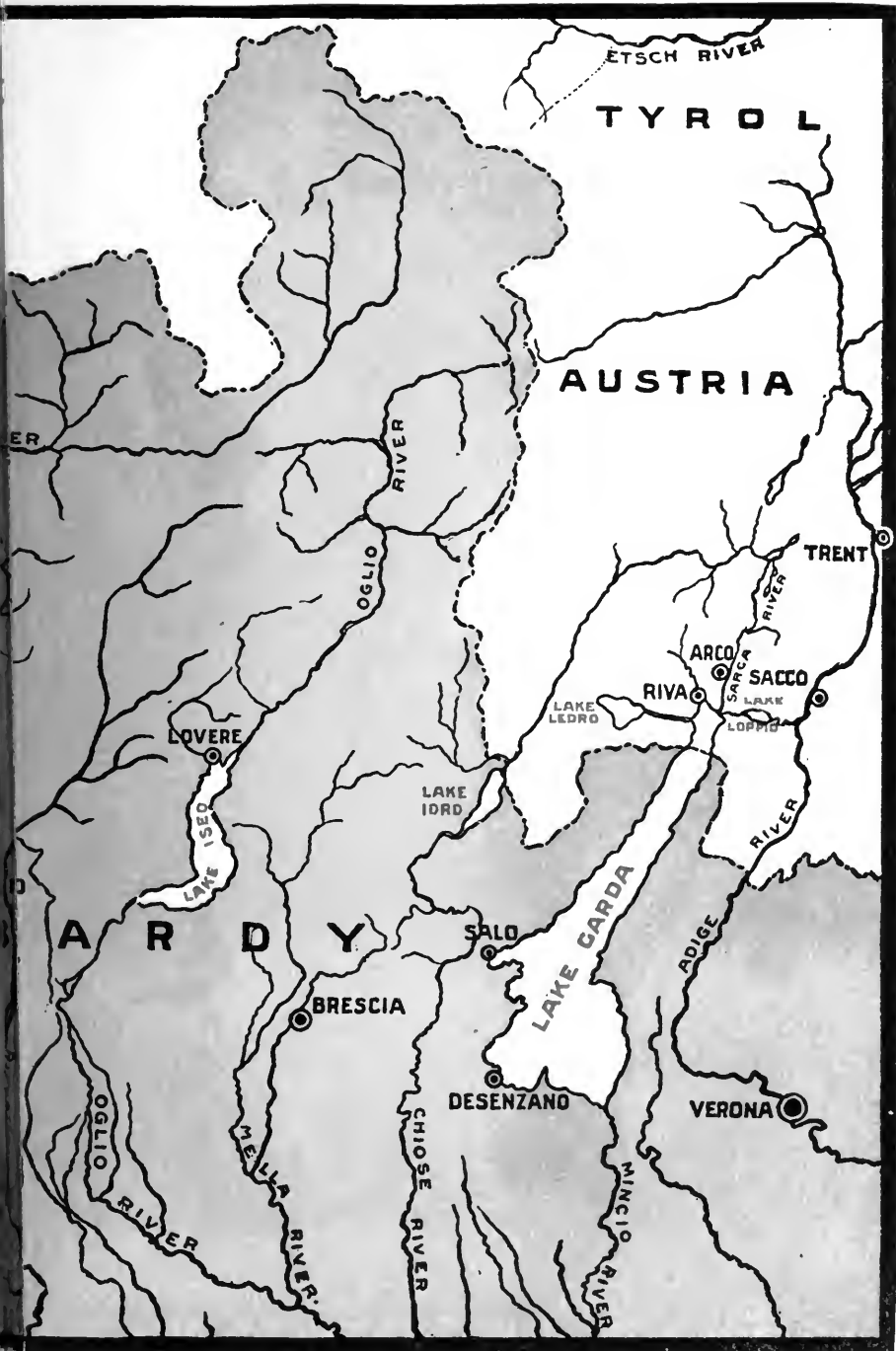




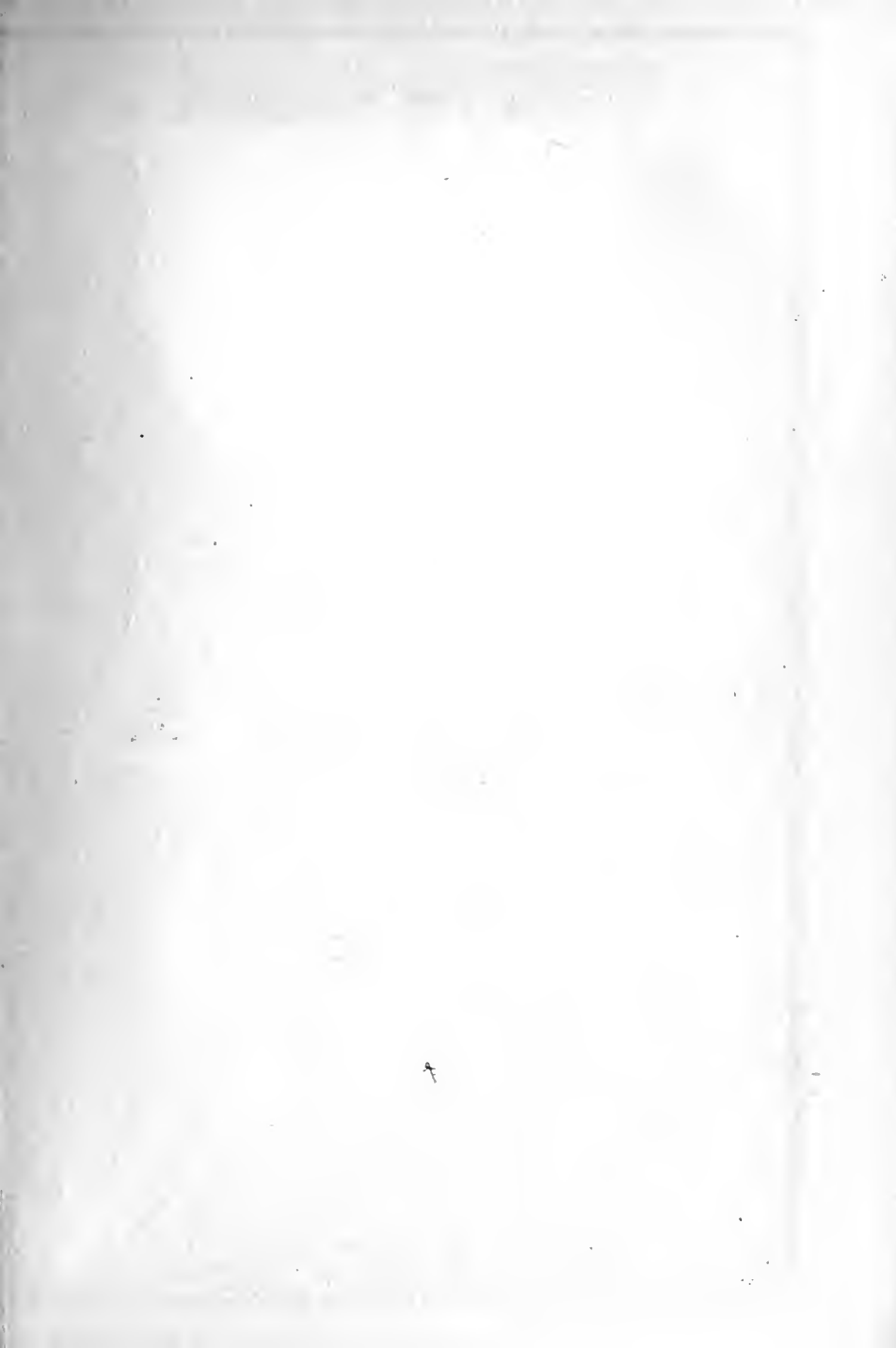


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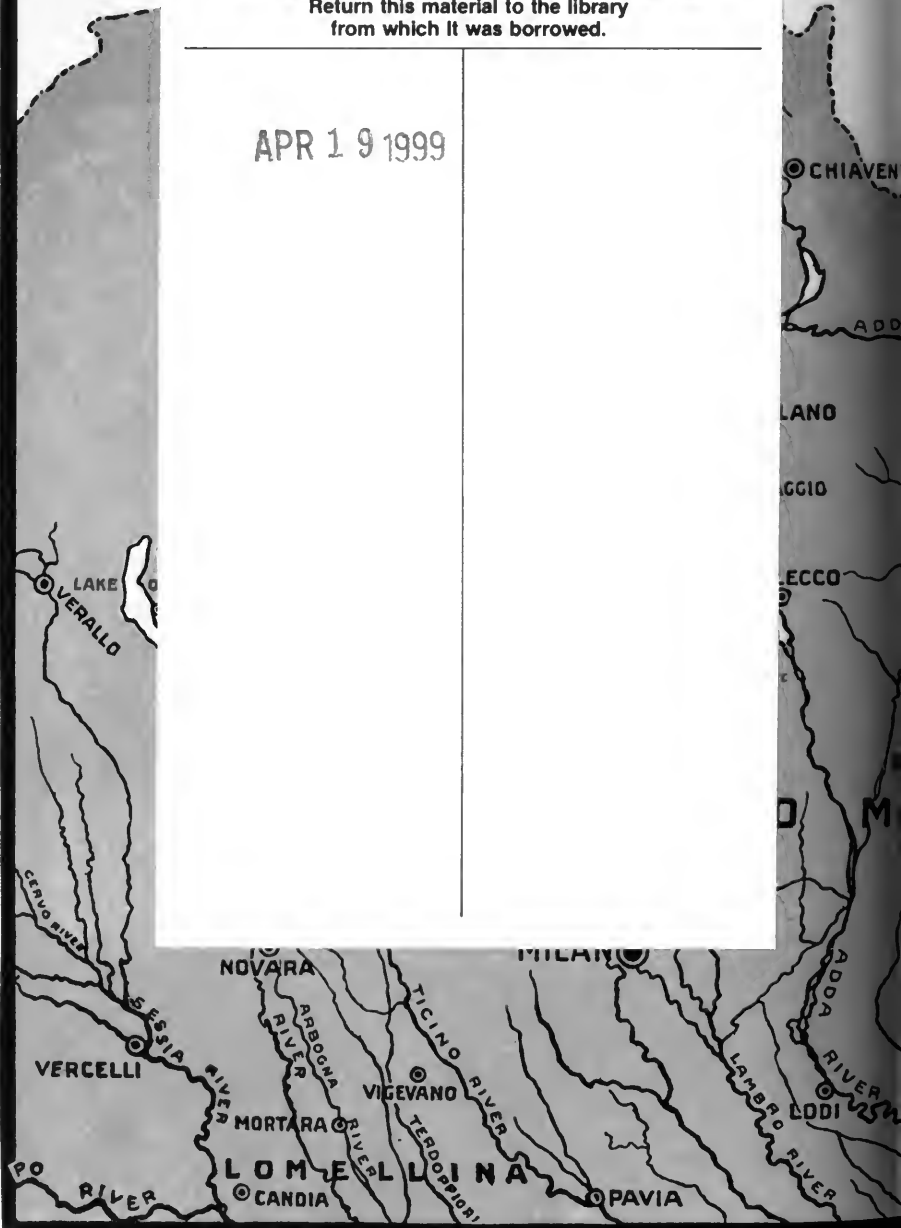






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